

REPRESENTATIONS OF GENTILITY IN THE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF THE BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER CANON

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis is to study the dramatization of the selfhood of gentility in the plays of the Beaumont and Fletcher canon, mainly by focusing on issues of dramatic structure and language but also by examining the social or political context which may have generated a particular representation. Conduct books are used to illuminate this context.

Chapter 1 ('Stoic Gentility') analyses The Tragedy of Bonduca in the light of Stoic views of the self and their influence on seventeenth-century ideals of gentility but also in the light of the political and military crisis of the period. Chapter 2 ('Chivalric Gentility') studies The Knight of Malta as a critique of contemporary upper-class mores through a contrast with a legendary past. Chapter 3 ('Kings and Ushers') shows how The Humorous Lieutenant represents gentility as an awareness of one's position and the duties it entails; without this awareness, social order is lost and kings become equated with ushers. Chapter 4 ('Gentility and Political Authority') and Chapter 5 ('Gentility and Patronage') deal with The Nice Valour and The Queen of Corinth respectively. Both are plays which attempt to delineate limits for the power of political authority to control social distinctions. In both plays, the good courtier is the one who has preserved the traditional marks of gentry identity. Chapter 6 ('Educating the Gentleman'), which examines The Elder Brother, shows the failure of both the court and conventional gentry culture to educate their society and cultivate the inner life. Chapter 7 ('Theatre of the Absurd') compares The Noble Gentleman to the twentieth-century Theatre of the Absurd. Chapter 8 ('Christian Language, Fashionable Manners') is a study of the tactics the gallant employs in The Scornful Lady in order to manipulate his environment; the gallant's success is due to the fact that he dresses up his arguments in the language of Christianity. Chapter 9 ('Gentility and Gender: Masculine Bonding, Feminine Charity') examines the relevance of the patronage ethic associated with gentility to contemporary town living in Wit without Money. Chapter 10 ('Good Manners: Gentlemen and "Gamesters"') examines conventional models of gentry education in accordance with their ability to develop self-knowledge or to encourage self-dramatization in The Wild-Goose Chase. Chapter 11 ('Quarrelsome Gentility') looks at the relationship between duelling, subjectivity and truth in The Little French Lawyer.

It is concluded that the plays draw attention to the elusive nature of public constructions of selfhood and represent status in terms of inwardness. This can be seen in the terms associated with status, which refer to the mind, knowledge, self-knowledge, the inner life, learning, understanding, decorum. The reasons for this emphasis on the self are related to the two main influences in relation to which gentility is formulated in the plays: political authority and social living. Regarding the former, the plays register an anxiety about the monarch's claims to control over social

distinctions and use gentility as a subversive political discourse. In the case of the social reality, there is a reiterated fear of a hiatus between symbols and what they signify, on both a physical and a linguistic level. The emphasis of the plays on status as inwardness is significant in relation to a culture where external demarcations of status were becoming increasingly unreliable. Gentility is associated with the possession of an essential self and a unified consciousness; those who lack it are either empty or possess a dislocated subjectivity.

Abbreviations

<u>IYNM</u>	James Cleland, <u>Ἡρωπαιδεία; or, The Institution of a Young Noble Man</u> (1607)
<u>CG</u>	Henry Peacham, <u>The Complete Gentleman</u> (1622)
<u>EG</u>	Richard Brathwait, <u>The English Gentleman</u> (1630)

INTRODUCTION

A. In Search of the Fletcherian Gentleman

The aim of the thesis is to study the dramatization of the selfhood of gentility in the plays of the Beaumont and Fletcher canon, mainly by focusing on issues of dramatic structure and language but also by examining the social or political context which may have generated a particular representation. Prior to describing how the parameters of the gentle self are represented in the theatre, it would perhaps be appropriate to point out that such selfhood does exist. New Historicist criticism insists, rightly I think, that the self is not independent of its social context. According to Greenblatt, there are no moments of pure, unfettered subjectivity; the human subject is 'remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society'.¹ Similarly, Jonathan Dollimore has challenged essentialism and has argued that the identities of Jacobean protagonists are shown to be 'precariously dependent' on the social reality which confronts them.² They are not capable of defining themselves from within because there is 'no inner self into which one can withdraw'; stoic strategies prove unsuccessful because they posit 'a non-existent autonomous realm of being'.³ However, the plays he selects to prove that the quest for an essential autonomous self is

abandoned tend to be those which dissociate social rank from innate superiority, such as Middleton's The Changeling and Webster's The White Devil.⁴ There is no mention of the duchess of Malfi who remains 'Duchess of Malfi' still in the homonymous play. Such criticism seems to assume that the dependence of the self on the social context means that inwardness disappears and that the self is a vacuum filled only by the social context. This is often reflected in criticism which emphasizes the context at the expense of the text. Greenblatt claims that he found it impossible to focus on a moment of 'apparently autonomous self-fashioning' because identity was never freely chosen but a cultural artifact.⁵ He admits that self-fashioning and being fashioned by cultural institutions - family, religion, state - are inseparably intertwined, but takes this to mean that the latter can only take place at the expense of the former rather than in co-operation with it; if there remain traces of free choice, the choice is among possibilities whose range is 'strictly delineated by the social and ideological system in force'.⁶ However, although this system may provide a range of influences, these will be processed and collated by the individual subjectivity, and the end-product may be entirely different from the materials provided by the context. Identity may be formed in reaction as well as in response to a social and ideological system; and in the plays selected for presentation here the gentleman's sense of self is shaped in reaction to the political or social environment. Identity is enhanced rather than erased by an oppressive social or political context because it is forced

to develop a language of its own. The emphasis of the plays on status as a state of mind, a spiritual condition, knowledge, an awareness of duty, in one word as inwardness, is significant in relation to a culture where external demarcations of status were becoming increasingly unreliable.

It is in these instances of divergence from convention that inwardness becomes most evident. The complexity and political and social significance which the representation of the gentleman achieves in drama are generated in relation to the conventions of his representation which already circulate in his culture; The Knight of Malta uses the ubiquitous language of chivalry to formulate a critique of contemporary social conditions. No social and ideological system is so well-proofed as to preclude the circulation of subversive discourses or discourses which can be manipulated by the individual in a subversive way. In the plays presented here identity becomes Greenblatt's 'cultural artifact' only in plebeians. The ability to shape a personal language, even if it employs terms which already exist, presupposes the existence of a core self and often becomes a social distinction. In The Nice Valour, The Queen of Corinth, The Noble Gentleman, The Scornful Lady, Wit without Money, The Wild-Goose Chase and The Little French Lawyer, the gentleman is at ease with the discourses of his culture and is capable of shaping an individual identity by using their terms; but the plebeian adopts the same language because he lacks an essential self and is entirely filled by the social context. For instance, in The Noble Gentleman Marine adopts the forms

and language of status but his lack of inwardness results in absurdity; and in The Little French Lawyer, La Writ is perfectly capable of conforming to the code of conduct of the gallants but his lack of a central self means that he is incapable of manipulating its language and applying the code with an understanding of context.

I mentioned that no social or ideological system is so well-proofed as to preclude the circulation of subversive discourses or discourses which can be manipulated by the individual in a subversive way. I have selected these plays because they share a common use of gentility as one such language. By focusing on figures who embody uncompromisingly the gentry's code of conduct, the plays speak eloquently for the political and social anxieties of the time. Bonduca (Chapter 1, 'Stoic Gentility') is seen in the light of Stoic views of the self and their influence on seventeenth-century ideals of gentility but also in the light of the political and military crisis of the period which is related to this closing in on the self. The Knight of Malta (Chapter 2, 'Chivalric Gentility') also voices political and social criticism by constructing an implicit antithesis between contemporary upper-class mores and a legendary past. In this play chivalry provides the language through which the insignia of status are realigned with the ethic of service they originally denoted. The separation of status and duty is also seen in The Humorous Lieutenant, The Queen of Corinth and, in a more extreme representation, in The Noble Gentleman. In the chivalric past of The Knight of Malta, distinctions are based on the inward gentility which is

the prerogative of the high-born only, not, as in the period, on empty symbolisms of power which everyone could appropriate. The same scepticism on the outward construction of status is seen in The Humorous Lieutenant (Chapter 3, 'Kings and Ushers'); here, gentility is represented as an awareness of one's position and the duties it entails. Without this awareness, social order is lost and kings become equated with ushers. The attempts of authority to stifle the inner life in order to ensure obedience abolish the only valid plane of social distinction.

This is also seen in The Nice Valour (Chapter 4, 'Gentility and Political Authority') and The Queen of Corinth (Chapter 5, 'Gentility and Patronage'). In these two plays gentility is associated with inner consistency and represented as being in conflict with political authority; the conflict is resolved by showing that the good courtier is the one who has preserved an awareness of his gentry identity. Political authority can enhance gentility but it cannot confer it. The conflict between gentility and political authority arises from the fact that gentility presupposes self-knowledge, an awareness of one's social identity formulated from the inside, whereas authority seeks to drown individuality and self-awareness and to control social distinctions. When political or social authority attempts to shackle the independence of the self, bureaucracy and an excessive insistence on rationality set in, as seen in The Humorous Lieutenant and The Nice Valour. It is not only political authority which threatens the awareness which constitutes gentility. In both social and

political life there is a privileging of social skills, appearances and values at the expense of knowledge and the inner life. The life of fashion is inimical to both knowledge and self-knowledge. In The Elder Brother and The Wild-Goose Chase it is suggested that the fashionable schemes of education for the upper class do not contribute to self-knowledge but encourage role-playing instead. In The Elder Brother (Chapter 6, 'Educating the Gentleman') the emphasis of political and social authorities on obedience encourages mechanistic habits of thought and prohibits the cultivation of the inner life, the source of self-knowledge and moral public action. The Noble Gentleman (Chapter 7, 'Theatre of the Absurd') is a thorough study of the absurdity which ensues when public forms are separated from inwardness. The pursuit of power and its forms without awareness results in status becoming absurd and/or theatrical. As in The Humorous Lieutenant, it is suggested that social and political power is not pure appearance but a mode of inwardness.

In The Scornful Lady (Chapter 8, 'Christian Language, Fashionable Manners'), social capitals like land, titles and an ethos of social obligations are shown to be more influential in determining social distinctions than the usurer's financial capital. Money threatens the idea of a stable identity because of its ability to transform instantly. Wit without Money (Chapter 9, 'Gentility and Gender: Masculine Bonding, Feminine Charity') also shows various forms of social capital to be more valuable than wealth. Fletcher is more interested in exploring the consciousness of gentility and sculpting a

code of conduct for the gentleman and less in tensions between different classes. The antagonism between merchant and gentleman, a classic of city comedy, does not exist in Wit without Money. The prevailing gentry ethic means that there is more emphasis on materialism than understanding and intellectual qualities. Money threatens the idea that there is a core self which cannot be changed; it encourages an anti-essentialism which the gallant denies, and reduces the self to the external trappings of the persona which can easily be bought. The gallant's status does not depend on what he does but on who he is; it is therefore not reducible to a single action or quality as the usurer in The Scornful Lady or La Writ in The Little French Lawyer think. In The Wild-Goose Chase (Chapter 10, 'Good Manners: Gentlemen and "Gamesters"') conventional models of education for the upper class (travelling, humanistic learning) are shown to be misused in a social environment which emphasizes externals over the inner life. Both gentlemen and ladies are not concerned with achieving self-knowledge and inward balance but distinction in a particular aspect of social behaviour. The emphasis on externals and social living results in a lack of self-knowledge, and this, in turn, leads to an enslavement to social codes and public perceptions as well as an inability to deal with the unexpected. The lack of self-knowledge and the emphasis on reputation rather than true honour has the same consequences in The Little French Lawyer (Chapter 11, 'Quarrelsome Gentility').

It is concluded that the plays draw attention to the elusive nature of public constructions of selfhood and represent status in terms of inwardness. This can be seen in the terms associated with status, which refer to the mind, knowledge, self-knowledge, the inner life, learning, understanding, decorum. The reasons for this emphasis on the self are related to the two main influences in relation to which gentility is formulated in the plays selected: political authority and social living. Regarding the former, the plays register an anxiety about the monarch's claims to control over social distinctions and use gentility as a subversive political discourse. In the case of the social reality, there is a reiterated fear of a hiatus between symbols and what they signify, on both a physical and a linguistic level. The emphasis of the plays on status as inwardness is significant in relation to a culture where external demarcations of status were becoming increasingly unreliable.

The action of each play takes place in a different setting which, in the usual sense of time and geographical space, includes different social groups or political allegiances; but the notion of setting also embraces a more general sense, that of social space. Different kinds of social space dictate different kinds of self-dramatization and rhetorical modes. Although each play represents a different social arena, there are two main tendencies in the dramatization of gentle selfhood. One which emphasizes its inwardness and is often seen in plays which attempt to define the relationship of gentility to political authority; and the other which is based

on performativity, encountered in plays reflecting perceptions of social life and ideals of manners. The former can be compared to Stoic views of the self and the latter to the Castiglionesque tradition, with its emphasis on self-representation and role-playing. Chapters 8-11 focus on the latter and their protagonists are gallants who use their belief in an essential gentle self not as a source of stability but as a legitimization of their role-playing; they are good actors precisely because they possess an essential self. The fact that the gallant is always in control of his roles suggests that behind the complex performance there is an 'essential' self. The plebeians who adopt roles without the inwardness appropriate for status become obsessed with the roles they play and enact them compulsively, as in The Noble Gentleman and The Little French Lawyer. They, too, can be actors but actors who overact their parts, betraying their unease. The Humorous Lieutenant, The Noble Gentleman, The Wild-Goose Chase and The Little French Lawyer suggest that actions are meaningful only if the doer has himself decided to do what he does; otherwise the actions are meaningless and social and personal relationships become absurd.

Gentility as a form of selfhood is represented as a force that stands above historical circumstances, social conditions and political oppression; it is a central core which provides stability in the face of all that is external to the self. In Bonduca, this prioritizing of the noble self above Fortune and authority is couched in the language of Stoicism, which was prominent as a philosophy of gentility in seventeenth-century conduct books. It might

appear that it takes a big leap of the imagination to get from Caratach of Bonduca to Valentine in Wit without Money. Yet in Wit without Money a desire for external rewards, those conferred by fortune, wealth, society, stems from a mistaken view of gentility, a belief that the value of the self depends on external goods rather than inward virtues, that gentility is something that can be bought or put on. From Bonduca, with its classical setting, to city comedies like Wit without Money the representation of gentility is pervaded by a belief that there is a fundamental virtue in a will that attempts to frustrate the wishes of Fortune or to transcend the limitations of one's social or political environment. The heroic view of gentry virtue is seen not only in plays with a classical or court setting but also in plays like The Elder Brother, Wit without Money and The Little French Lawyer, where assertiveness becomes a kind of unofficial heroism. The intellectual vitality of the officious commander, subversive gallant, idealistic courtier, or quaint scholar is represented as redemptive, an escape from dull, worldly but above all unheroic environments, social or political. Plays like Bonduca, The Knight of Malta, Wit without Money create elite brotherhoods, imaginative spaces of performance and action which seem to be lacking in contemporary life and where the self is the dominant social reality. This ability to affect one's environment through a special quality of will is one of the marks of status in Fletcherian drama. None of the gentlemen announce their status in a conventionally powerful manner. Gentility is the constancy to one's self which makes one's thought

and action free from external influences. In The Knight of Malta, The Nice Valour, The Queen of Corinth and The Little French Lawyer one sign of this constancy is disinterestedness, the ability to act morally without the promise of reward or the threat of punishment. In private life this is seen in Platonic love, which is disinterested love because it does not require sexual favours in return.

The theme of gentility is usually intertwined with epistemological questions on the nature of truth, especially the feasibility of an objective reality beyond the fictions that the mind creates and therefore an objective social value. The plays are concerned that truth has lost its objectivity and has degenerated into subjective, relativized knowledge. The Knight of Malta, The Humorous Lieutenant, The Nice Valour, The Noble Gentleman and The Little French Lawyer are concerned with the relations between sense perceptions and reality and their implications for issues of status. True honour should be based on truth tried and proved, not spoken or imagined. Gentility is not simply a problem of language or truth-telling. For this reason, although the plays acknowledge the separability of a true interior and a socially visible, falsifiable exterior, the body remains a site for the inscription of truth and status. Discovering the truth about someone's status is a physical problem in The Knight of Malta, The Nice Valour, The Noble Gentleman, The Elder Brother and The Little French Lawyer; the body is always reinstated as the medium of truth. The plays seem to suggest that the physical presence can deceive, or that it cannot by itself

command the respect of an audience without suitable rhetorical representation; but at the same time there is an essentialist belief in gentility that can be empirically grounded without rhetoric, a faith in the possibility of reuniting signifiers with their original meanings, the symbolic with the substantive.

Through the creation of political or social utopias the plays voice political and social criticism. Against the background of James's glorification of peace, Bonduca, one of Fletcher's solo plays, exploits classical and military ideals to provide a critique of contemporary political and military conditions. At other times, the rhetoric of criticism revolves around the evocation of past models of gentry virtue, as in The Knight of Malta, The Queen of Corinth (with a specifically Elizabethan context) and The Elder Brother, collaborations with Massinger. The gentle virtues praised may be among those found in conduct books but to say that does not adequately explain the emphasis of the plays on them. These virtues were often emphasized by those eager to attack the court culture; and the context in which they are represented suggests that they are no longer found in this period - the virtues are used to construct an antithesis and criticism. It was up to the audience to decide how far the lost golden ages would be recaptured. The emphasis on the self is related to the shift from public to private virtue, which was the contribution of the seventeenth century to the ideal of gentility; but the emphasis on the contemplative life was also used by those who wished to attack the upper-class culture, and

the insistence of the plays on gentility as inward and ineffable has the same overtones. In The Knight of Malta, the parallel between spirituality and social distinction has a political subtext, as it is used to invalidate the brittle, worldly glory of the court, with its 'glittering show'. The Stoic stability of Caratach in Bonduca is here replaced by a similar insistence on a 'gatherd minde', one which 'time nor all occasions ever may/ After disperse, or staine' (1.3.46-48).

At a time when identity was dramatized in gestures, symbols and clothes, such signs were becoming increasingly unreliable. The plays respond with an attempt to separate that which is proper from that which is external to the self. There is a fear that socially visible symbols of social status like clothes obscure rather than express inward distinction. This is expressed in a reiterated concern that there is a discrepancy between signs and meaning. Many plays revolve around a debate on the true signs of individual identity, and some raise the question of how language can provide an accurate indication of an individual's value. The dislocation of language expresses the disjunction between signifier and signified which can be found on all levels of reality: identity and social representation, inwardness and the performative nature of gentility, roles and function, forms and substance. Those who have a stable identity also accept that words have a single, fixed meaning. Yet even the stable, unified self cannot communicate with others without adopting social and linguistic roles; a literal habit of mind makes communication impossible in The

Scornful Lady and The Wild-Goose Chase. Meaning can be found in the stability of identity and language; the gallant, however, refuses to accept a fixed correspondence between words and their meanings. Both social and sexual domination are associated with the ability to play with the instabilities of meaning in The Scornful Lady, Wit without Money and The Wild-Goose Chase.

B. The Relevance of Conduct Books

I mentioned earlier that the complexity and social and political significance which the representation of the gentleman achieves in drama are generated in relation to the conventions of his representation which already circulate in his culture. These are set out in the conduct books, which help show that the drama carries ideas previously aired elsewhere. Conduct books provide insights into the standards by which the gentility of the protagonists on stage would be evaluated. Developing a better awareness of the expectations of the society of the period through the conduct books facilitates a historicized account of the plays. Conduct books will also be used to demonstrate the centrality of certain concepts, many with a political or social colouring, which would otherwise be ignored in the interpretation of the dramatic works. Demonstrating the existence of a language of gentility suggests that social and political issues are more relevant to the interpretation of Fletcherian drama than has been proved so far. The aim of the thesis will be to indicate how integral to the political and social preoccupations of the dramatic works in this canon the ideal of gentility is and how other discourses in the plays, for instance those of religion, chivalry, or philosophy are grafted on and shaped to this end.

The dramatic representation of the gentleman revolves around concepts that could be found in a variety of texts (sermons, pamphlets,

tracts, etc). Conduct books will be highlighted in my study because they are addressed specifically to the upper class. A text like a sermon or a tract retains its public character, by contrast to a conduct book which relies for its appeal on its claim to be exclusive, private, a kind of inward knowledge reserved for the select few. Conduct books therefore help to distinguish the ideals of gentility from other discourses. The observation 'now-a-days the clothes are spoken to, and not the men; and few have regard to the riches of the breast but of the backe. He who in his fashions differs and degenerates most from his ancestours is held the most generous gentleman' found in Anthony Stafford's Meditations and Resolutions⁷ gives us some information on the society of its day but it should be used with caution because it comes from a piece of work where the religious discourse takes priority over social and other considerations and tends to interpret them in a unilateral manner, cutting across social boundaries.

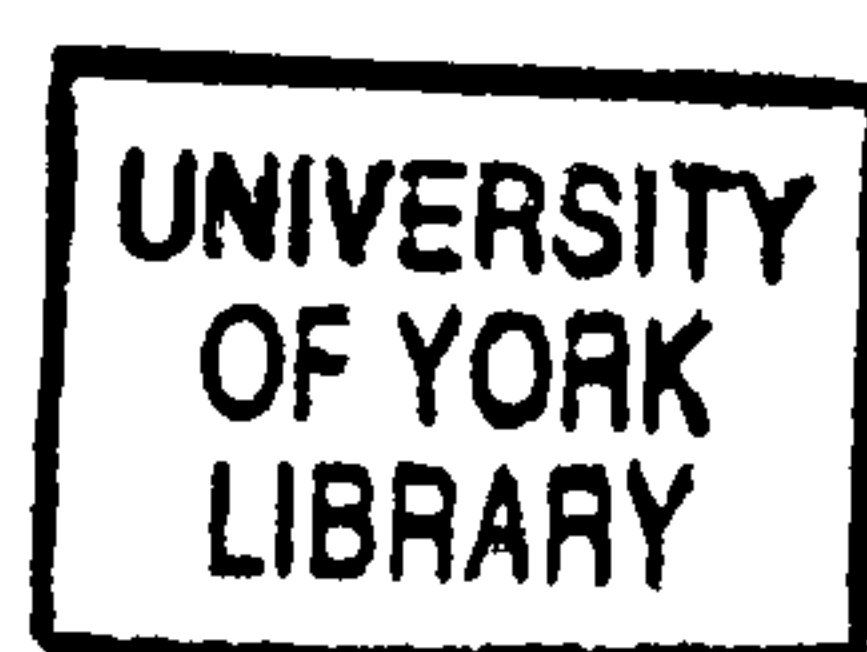
Another reason for giving conduct books priority is that both conduct books and drama assume, although they may not have, the same audience, the upper-class Jacobeans. According to Gurr, the references of the dramatists in the period are notably biassed towards the 'select' hall playhouse clientele, although the only real members of the gentry confirmed to have attended playhouses in the decade up to 1610 divided themselves equally, two at the Blackfriars and two at the Globe.⁸ In the prologue to The Fair Maid of the Inn (1625/26), Fletcher observes that the strain of his inventions is bent to the 'nobler Judgements' at the Blackfriars.

Despite the fact that scholarship has established that the audience was diverse, Fletcher addresses his work to a particular section of the audience. He writes with the audience of the conduct books in mind. Furthermore, the possession of the Blackfriars by the King's Men gave the company the playhouse situated closest to the Inns of Court, familiar over the ten preceding years as the venue for a repertory aimed precisely at law students and gallants.⁹ It has also been argued that the theatres began to respond to the increasing number of gentry in the capital and began to reflect gentry values.¹⁰

One should be aware of generic divides because the conduct books adopt a highly prescriptive tone and do not allow for contradictions inherent in the social reality about what constitutes gentility; plays revolve precisely around these contradictions. Conduct books may also be too idealistic or fail to catch up fast enough with social changes. Reading between the lines in conduct books can be very useful in clarifying issues that are also handled by the drama; they may begin by castigating the existing social practices before going on to establish the ideal or provide covert commentary on social relationships in actuality. Like plays, conduct books may also contain double standards, with certain statements denying or modifying others; but these are either muted, or simply exist side by side. In a dramatic context, such conflicts need to be reconciled and the resolution chosen suggests the playwright's orientation.

The relationship between conduct books and drama is mediated through the historical context. The process of selection and shaping from the qualities that were set out in the conduct books is affected by the social and political circumstances surrounding a play. For instance, military gentlemen have conventionally been treated as stereotypes, a product of humours psychology rather than complex historical circumstances such as James's glorification of peace or the decline of the military function of the upper class. There has been a tendency, in analysing Fletcherian drama, to attribute its faults or merits exclusively to the genre it was written in. The plays have traditionally been seen as typical of an escapist genre and the protagonists in all but social and political terms; but the plays were written under the influence of the great ideals of gentility of the time, which, due to the political and social circumstances prevailing, acquire a particular specificity and interest in drama. Fletcherian protagonists were not only fashioned by Guarini's definition of tragicomedy but by contemporary attempts to redefine gentility. The historical context dictates the playwright's representation of the standards circulating in his society.

Early criticism of Fletcherian drama treated the political vision of the plays as servile to royalism, following in the footsteps of Coleridge.¹¹ This has now been discounted,¹² but there has been no adequate study of the discourses employed in the criticism of contemporary politics or of the positive feedback of the plays; even studies on the sociopolitical concerns of Fletcherian drama are still carried out in terms of genre or morality and



inadequately historicized. Eugene M. Waith's study is typical of this tendency; it is based on the assumption that 'the emphasis is upon the formal pattern, to which everything else is sacrificed' and a view of Fletcherian drama as an imitation of the familiar world which is 'counteracted by extreme improbabilities and distortion' and where the appeal is made directly to 'an emotional and aesthetic response'.¹³ Nancy-Cotton Pearce tries to redress moral objections to Fletcherian drama by discrediting Romantic misconceptions about their cultural and literary antecedents; this means that plays like The Knight of Malta are analysed in terms of the morality structure of the chastity play, which completely dehistoricizes them.¹⁴ Finkelpearl provides evidence in favour of the antiroyalism of the plays, relying on the collaborators' family backgrounds, their social placement, their friends and connections, the influences on their plays and the evidence of the plays themselves.¹⁵ Sandra Clark studies the plays in terms of their sexual politics but does not sufficiently relate issues of sexuality and gender to those of power. For instance, The Humorous Lieutenant is described as a study of chastity by means of 'a setting and structural pattern which juxtaposes masculine and feminine values through themes of love and war'. The King's desire for his subject is 'not conceived politically' and 'his geriatric lust signifies only on a moral level'.¹⁶ No attempt is made to integrate Leucippe into the political vision of the play or to relate issues of sexuality to those of power. The reliance on genre is also found here. The Humorous Lieutenant is 'generically shaped

like a romance' and the ending is 'an affirmation of romance values';¹⁷ there is no mention of the hierarchy of vice which includes the king. McMullan's study The Politics of Unease looks at the plays as the product of negotiation between the ethos of the aristocratic, Protestant country household and of life in London and at court.¹⁸ This is refreshing, as Fletcher has traditionally been seen in terms of juxtapositions. However, the use of history as the starting point rather than the texts themselves creates an oblique perspective which prioritizes issues that are not the focus of the plays. In his analysis of Wit without Money McMullan refers to the social milieu of the city which produces 'the inexorable acquisitiveness of the Merchant'; but this is not a central concern in the play. In fact, Fletcherian city comedy is more concerned with the code of the gentleman rather than his antagonism with other classes. In commenting on the same play he also observes that 'after the primarily sexual motivations of the central acts, Act V scene ii of Wit without Money returns its gaze to the problems of the land';¹⁹ this is typical of the tendency in this and other studies to separate issues that the plays align, in this case issues of status and gender.

For purposes of dates and authorship of the plays I have relied on the Cambridge University Press edition of the plays under the general editorship of F.T. Bowers, supplemented by the studies of Cyrus Hoy, Bertha Hensman and E.H.C. Oliphant which are mentioned in the bibliography. There are several collaborative plays included because my

study aims to put different dramatic texts in context and to compare and contrast them, not to support a unified thesis on a particular author. My aim has been to prove the relevance of gentility to drama, not to a playwright's biography. From this point of view, the collaboration has the advantage of making for more diversity, which has been my priority, as studies so far have muted the individuality of the plays in the canon. However, I have tried to avoid confusing distinctions which relate to authorship with distinctions of dramatic representation. The plays are not set out in chronological order because I have tried to keep close plays with similar concerns; but I have not tried to make the thesis prescriptively reiterable by forcing a political or social reading onto a play which, in its totality, does not encourage it, as this would result in the methodological preconceptions seen in some of the studies I have just mentioned.

CHAPTER ONE

The Tragedy of Bonduca (1609-14): Stoic Gentility

A. The Critical Heritage

Criticism of Bonduca, one of Fletcher's solo plays, has tended to focus on the structure of the play, with its dichotomy of Rome versus Britain. Attempts have been made to find on which side Fletcher's sympathies lay, the most notable being that of Green, who analyses the play in terms of its imagery and concludes that Rome is identified with positive values and Britain with negative ones;¹ the play is 'a code of ethics for the heroic life' and Rome its chief measure of heroic worth.² Hickman is more discerning in that he lays a greater emphasis on the ambiguities rather than the distinctions the play establishes. He argues that the play emphasizes 'the problematic nature of discrimination' and thus destroys any faith in the successful application of ideal standards of honour to practical situations.³ Hickman's argument is more receptive to the ironies in the heroic ideals of the play but he, too, is overly dependent on its antithetical structure, which he treats as a constant challenge to the audience's discriminatory powers.⁴ Accordingly, he interprets Caratach's survival as proving that the play intentionally leaves at the end an ambivalence about Caratach, who is a brave fighter but a 'poor military thinker'; Caratach's worship of honour is misguided because 'the world takes advantage of what becomes in

practice a weakness'.⁵ Overall, criticism of the play has concentrated on its artistic merits and its apparent scepticism on the feasibility of honourable conduct. Studies of structure and imagery are useful in drawing attention to the fact that Fletcher is capable of complexity in the way he weaves the fabric of his plays, yet they do not provide a completely satisfactory account of the play's significance. Green sets out to discover subtlety in the play, but it is only artistic subtlety that he hopes to find. He grants the critical prejudice that Fletcher's method is to focus on a dominant theme and to examine it from various perspectives; as a result, he concludes that it is not without justice that Fletcher's method has been criticized as being too mechanistic,⁶ which is really attributing the faults of the criticism to the play. Structure and imagery have been overestimated as keys to an understanding of Bonduca; they may perhaps enlighten certain aspects of the play but all criticism concentrating on them suffers from an inability to absorb the elements of the play into a whole and provide a coherent interpretation. As a result, certain elements remain unaccommodated and classed as ambivalences and contradictions.

The emphasis on the play as a study of a military ideal, encountered in earlier studies like Mincoff's down to Hickman also produces reductive readings. Mincoff believes that 'what binds these figures together as representatives of a single type is their complete acceptance, one and all, of the artificial code of military glory'; but interpreting characters solely in terms of their attitude to the military ideal results in comments like 'he

[Caratach] is in fact a princely Petillius'.⁷ Surely Caratach is more complex than Petillius, not to mention that Caratach would never endorse the 'policie' which Petillius stoops to. Treating the play as a conflict of two military societies/ideals would be to ignore that it is a Roman play manned with forceful personages who seek, above all, not just honour, but to control history or, in the words of the play, 'Fortune' (Swetonius in 1.2, Bonduca's daughters in 2.3, Bonduca in 4.4). Caratach is not just a military type but the focus of the action because he provides the conceptual framework by which to evaluate it in the opening scene; all other characters simply provide alternative ways of controlling Fortune. Without an understanding of his standards, Caratach will appear to be a 'poor military thinker', an autistic character missing the subtler nuances and complications of his actions that are obvious to the audience. Bonduca is concerned more with how the gentle self is positioned against a historical challenge than with how a particular conflict is resolved. Conflicts are highly personalized; the antithetical structure is only the canvas against which competing personalities try to fulfil themselves. The focus of the action is not the event but the individual; if only one can get the right attitude, one can even manipulate the gods (3.1.53-58). Moreover, the ending of the play has often seemed problematic or inconclusive because Caratach does not seem to be moved from his initial position of insistence on honourable conduct, which fits in uncomfortably with Hickman's view that the play destroys any faith in the application of honourable standards

of conduct to reality and his sense that the play creates an ambivalence surrounding Caratach at the end.

To view the play as a simple story of frustrated idealism would be to project an anachronistic belief in the practical value of all action onto a culture which regarded the Machiavel as the most serious threat to its social vision. Fletcher's audience would certainly be less distanced from Caratach's attitude to war than we are; two decades ago, at the siege of Rouen, the earl of Essex stood 'within three pikes of th' enemy's guard, where they have continual shooting', to exchange courtly compliments with one Chevalier Picard, who had once been Essex's guest in England.⁸ Caratach's doting on the enemy is another aspect of his character which criticism often takes issue with; but Caratach simply pays attention to the voice of his culture. Although it is hard to know at this historical remove exactly what the attitude of Fletcher's audience to Caratach would be, Caratach would not be seen as simply a naïve idealist - that is how twentieth-century cynicism would see him. Consequently, my efforts will concentrate on treating Caratach rather than the conflict between the two societies as the centrepiece of the play. My argument is that Bonduca establishes a form of response to reality which privileges the gentle self over the event; the self is fortified against the whims of Fortune and history through what I hope to prove is a Stoic view of gentility. This makes for more coherence in the play because it allows us to accept an ending which shows might conquering right, while at the same time leaving Caratach's

idealism in place. The play does indicate 'the problematic nature of discrimination' but it also puts forward a response to it. The ambivalence that Hickman traces in the ending is not related to Caratach but lies in the fact that the play can be seen both as a study in the limitations of inward gentility and as its triumph over the instability of worldly affairs.

This emphasis on the precedence of the gentle self over its society and politics evidenced in the Essex incident was part of the subtext of courtesy. Caratach and Penyus, who insist on courtesy, are both disobedient to their superiors for the sake of their 'noble bearing' (1.1.28). In 2.1 a deadly battle may be imminent but Penyus insists on being treated with all formality due to his rank (1-14). Despite his involvement in the world of politics, Caratach remains apolitical, his most valuable possession being the nobility of the self rather than the approval of authority. To Caratach and Penyus the Roman synopsis 'more wounds, more honour' (3.5.122) is not enough, as they must satisfy their inward, not only their public, part. No wonder love is rejected in the Roman culture - private feeling could create independent personalities out of the Roman automata and war loves discipline (1.2.35). These are some of the issues we shall see later on.

This shift from public to private virtue was the contribution of the seventeenth century to the ideal of gentility. In sixteenth-century conduct books the virtues of a gentleman were perceived as those of a governor; in the seventeenth century there is a shift in emphasis from the vita activa to

the vita contemplativa. The contribution of the seventeenth century to the ideal of gentility is that the gentleman is now urged to look more inside than to the world of action. Brathwait argues that the gentleman should try to acquire self-knowledge, and his emphasis on intellectual, inward nobility is typical of seventeenth-century conduct books. Meditation becomes as important as action (EG, p.77). This does not mean that in practice the gentleman has become the austere saint that conduct-book authors would have us believe he should be. What it does indicate, however, is a new response to the active, in the sense of political, life. Passive/private virtues are more emphasized than active/public ones. Brathwait, the par excellence Christian author on gentility, writing in 1630, in listing the qualities which confer gentility, changes Cleland's temperance and force to fortitude or stoutness in adversity (EG, p. 68). Brathwait's consummate gentlemen include such idealists as the Stoics or the knights of Malta. Brathwait defines fortitude as 'that noble marke which giveth a *Gentleman* his true character, shewing resolution as well in suffering, as acting' (EG, p.73). He labels this as a virtue derived from the Stoics and largely defined by a love of justice: the aims of such a Stoic gentleman are free from cruelty and vainglory, 'for as they scorne to triumph over an afflicted foe, so they dislike that conquest (unlesse necessitie enforce it) which is purchased by too much bloud' (EG, p.144). Brathwait's Stoicism is Christian, i.e. selectively uses only those parts of the philosophy which do not contradict Christian ethics. No considerations of political expediency

seem to worry Brathwait's Christian gentleman, a great contrast to The Gouverneur (1531) where aristocratic virtues are valued as currency in the field of the active life. The same virtues are usually recycled but the purpose for which they are employed differs: Elyot chooses his virtues as they are 'expedient to be in a gouverneur'.⁹ As the seventeenth century wears on, the emphasis on inner gentility, often employing terms previously aired by Stoicism, increases. In The Booke of Honour (1625) Francis Markham relates honour to judgement and the ability to take the upper hand over Fortune.¹⁰ In The Guide of Honour (1634) Anthony Stafford suggests that before trying to control events one should ensure that one has fortified the self so that misfortune does not find one unprepared; he, too, relates honour to a mind which the heaviest weight of Fortune can never oppress.¹¹ This shift in emphasis from the vita activa to the vita contemplativa is not fully explained by Christianity, with its emphasis on self-examination; it is especially prominent in authors who wish to attack upper-class culture. For Brathwait, a country gentleman impugning the values of the upper class, a passive, withdrawn nobility becomes the only alternative to the contemporary 'depraved effeminacie'. The same search for an inward, ineffable gentility impervious to chance, accident, unreliable externals and corrupting prosperity is encountered in Bonduca. Whether the heroes of Bonduca or The Knight of Malta or Brathwait's self-sacrificing idealist would be perceived as anachronistic is immaterial; what matters is

what these representations could tell us about the author's social or political vision.

The Stoic noble hero had pre-existed in drama but he was usually the stereotypical proud man whose pretences to god-like tranquillity were shattered (Angelo in Measure for Measure), or the world-weary suicide (Horatio in Hamlet). In these instances Stoicism is restricted to specific passages, or is based on popular misconceptions/caricatures of what a Stoic is. Shakespeare's Julius Caesar does explore the relationship between an insistence on nobility and political expediency, but the setting of the play does not have the contemporary feel of Jonson's Sejanus where the times and the men are not the same (1.1.86-87) and where Stoicism is a conscious response to a particular political environment. In seventeenth-century drama Stoicism is explored not just as a moral philosophy but also as a political one; for Caratach, as we shall see, Stoicism is an attitude to history and public life. Bonduca, like the Roman plays of Jonson and the Bussy plays of Chapman makes a thorough and consistent exploration of the implications of Stoic teaching for the selfhood of gentility.

The play is different from usual Roman plays in that it is not set in the organized political life of Republican or imperial Rome. Appleton has compared Bonduca to Shakespeare's Cymbeline,¹² but Fletcher's Romanitas is a far cry from the romanticized, providential world of Shakespeare's play. Fletcher is closer to Jonson's exploration of the

relationship between virtue and greatness in his Roman plays. Although Bonduca presents us with a military elite, not the political structure of Rome, the representation of noble virtue can be seen in the context of Jonson's Catiline and Sejanus. Like Bonduca, these are plays which present us with forceful personalities who are 'nearer to the gods,/ Than men, in nature' (Sejanus, 1.1.125-26) trying to control the flow of history; they speak in Tamburlaine's style, who claimed he could 'turn Fortune's wheel about'. Jonson's Rome has little room for metaphysical justice; gods are expected to intervene but they do not (Sejanus, 4.3.125-26); this is clearly not a benevolent universe. Rome operates according to the rule of the survival of the fittest. Noble virtue is placed against Fortune but Fortune is not a goddess, it is the deified political hotchpotch of a fallen society. Evil is doomed not thanks to the benevolent intervention of a metaphysical power but because history has a cyclical pattern (Catiline, 1.531-550).

The same secular view of history is found in Bonduca. Like Sejanus, Fletcher's play includes a sacrifice scene in which men claim that sacrifices are superstitious ceremonies (Bonduca, 3.1, Sejanus, 5.3); through individual merit even the displeasure of the gods can be conquered. This is a universe where you find what you seek and life works, as in the divination scene, as a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to Swetonius, those who do not fear will not meet terrifying obstacles (1.2.204-205). Caratach believes that the god's 'hidden meaning dwels in our

endeavours;/ Our valours are our best gods' (3.1.81-82). Swetonius tells his army that those who are valiant and wise rule heaven (3.2.74). Divine Providence does not seem to be operative in Bonduca. Hengo hopes to revenge his father's death, Bonduca the rapes, but none of these happens, and this despite the fact that the play manipulates us into expecting metaphysical justice to intervene in 3.1: the Britons have been wronged and it is fit that they should receive satisfaction. However, the prayer which Caratach addresses to the gods (3.1.53-74) urges them to help the best win and it is this which raises a fire from the altar, not Bonduca's cry for justice. Renaissance individualism is seen in both the good and the evil, as virtue in the former and closer to virtu in the latter. This is indicated in the similarities in the linguistic formulations of opposing claims, an additional reason for treating the antithetical structure as misleading. The subduing of Fate and the gods themselves through manhood is a belief that is found on both sides in Bonduca (3.1.55, 3.1.81-82, 3.2.74, 4.3.54-55). What appears to be the language of patriotic virtue is surprisingly close to Catiline's language of might conquering right; Catiline also claims that the conspirators will be able to instruct the Fates with their swords (5.6.29-30); 'a valiant man is his own fate and fortune' (4.3.35). The same trust in individual vigour which can dispense with the services of the gods is expressed by Catiline:

I call the faith of gods and men to question:

The power is in our hands; our bodies able;
Our minds as strong.

(1.368-70)

The terms used are so similar that one no longer knows whether the gods actively approve of what is happening or are simply indifferent, in the manner of Bajazeth's 'sleepy Mahomet' (3.3.269) in Tamburlaine I; and because violence is only contrasted with fraud, it is a short step from seeing it as virtue rather than a form of Machiavellian virtu.

Jonson's vision of the active life is a bleak one; authority becomes so oppressive that even the most private actions are transformed into meaningful political signs (Sejanus, 4.4.299-322). The only way to avoid such obtrusion is suicide, which is represented as the triumph of the noble consciousness over historical processes it cannot control. In Sejanus Silius deludes the Senate's fury because he has placed his guards 'within him, against Fortune's spite' and can escape them; even Fortune loses her threats when opposed by virtue. All that can happen in humanity he is fortified against; they are beneath him (3.1.320-31). Silius does not advocate active virtue but rather the passive resistance that renders all - force or fraud - meaningless. The only fortification he has against a fallen society of hatred, pride and servile flattery is the self. This allows him to look down upon these things; death is a way of mocking power. Agrippina agrees that the only way a nobleman can escape threatening authority is to treat it as a test of Fortune to exercise his virtue. He should think of his

birth and blood and 'stand upright;/ And though you do not act, yet suffer nobly' (4.2.73-74). The same idea of a central core in the individual which can remain unaffected by intrusive authority and Fortune is also seen in Bonduca; as we shall see, Bonduca uses death to mock Roman authority and maintain her nobility (4.4.141-53). Both Jonson and Fletcher gesture towards a socially superior self that is spiritual and passive, almost sacrificial, rather than worldly and aggressive. The virtues of the leading class, according to Catiline, should be wisdom, foresight, fortitude and faith; conscience should be preferred above reputation (2.375-78).

The Renaissance had to reconcile the disconcerting fact that it remained a society based upon force to its providential view of history. In Catiline Caesar states that

... when need spurs, despair will be call'd wisdom.

Less ought the care of men or fame to fright you,

For they that win do seldom receive shame

Of victory, howe'er it be achieved,

And vengeance least, for who besieged with wants

Would stop at death or anything beyond it?

Come, there was never any great thing yet

Aspired, but by violence or fraud.

(3.2.20-27)

The idea that great men cannot be bothered with considerations of conventional morality because too much is at stake hovers alarmingly over

both Bonduca and Catiline, which share an ambiguous attitude to violence; the sword is a symbol of justice but also of force. In Catiline, the sword becomes the emblem of the conspirators' individualism and cruelty and of their ability to conquer the Fates (5.6.29-30), setting power against a divinely ordained universe; but Rome is also a society that preserves order through violence. Fletcher, like Jonson in Catiline, gets carried away by the idea that there is a way of controlling Fate; and having indulged in fantasies of pure power triumphantly sweeping Fortune along the way, Fletcher adds the view of heaven as a place without violence and oppression (4.2.11-12), voiced by Caratach who has previously expressed his admiration for the Roman heroic ideal. This dormant admiration for violence is reinforced by a conviction which can be found in Fletcher, Jonson and Chapman's Bussy plays that they are living in a society that cannot provide them with sufficient challenge. Jonson's Sejanus conveys a sense that society is in a process of decline; they are 'poor, and degenerate from th' exalted strain/ Of our great fathers'; 'there's nothing Roman in us; nothing good,/ Gallant, or great' (1.1.87-103). Similarly, the inconsistencies in Roman integrity that have often troubled critics do not matter to Caratach because to him the Roman becomes a metonymy for the greatness and heroic values he cannot find in his own nation; Bonduca's Britain is a society in decline due to prosperity.¹³

B. Stoic Gentility

In the opening scene Caratach identifies himself as the wise man who remains unaffected by the changes of Fortune and maintains his noble bearing (1.1.20-54) in both good Fortune and adversity. Caratach regards good Fortune as the enemy to virtue because it breeds fancies in the mind and corrupts judgement. He advises Bonduca to retain her composure and stability as he does; it is only women who are inconstant and succumb to pride after they have achieved a victory (17-18). He also believes that Bonduca should maintain a noble bearing and treat her enemies in the same way, whether she is victorious or not, because preserving one's equanimity is necessary to wise judgement, 'discretion'. 'Discretion' in the play means wisdom and moderation, the noble bearing that Caratach tells Bonduca she lacks (21-31). It is the virtuous stability in the face of happiness or adversity (1.1.51-54); Caratach's virtue consists in his characteristically Stoic ability to both 'do and suffer' (1.1.79). Bonduca is presented as the unruly and obstinate woman whose lack of moderation expresses itself in her pride, her desire for revenge and her linguistic excesses; these are proof that women have no access to staid judgement. Bonduca becomes so intoxicated with words that she clouds her own judgement and Caratach reminds her that the talker is the opposite of the conqueror (1.1.21-24). Discretion, a wise judgement, is the source of Stoic virtue.¹⁴ Its enemy is, as in the play, good Fortune.¹⁵ It is one of the

principles of Stoic nobility that the wise man should remain unaffected by both good Fortune and adversity.¹⁶ The contrast between the mutability of Fortune and the stability of virtue is one of the principles of Stoic nobility, which emphasizes the imperviousness of the self to chance and accident; for Stoicism, the self is the only source of stability against the vicissitudes of Fortune. A good Fortune is treated by Stoicism as an evil because it obscures one's wise judgement by enhancing one's pride, the sin that causes Bonduca's and Britain's fall.

The play is pervaded by the contrast between Fortune and virtue, discretion and pride. Only gentlemen, not women and common soldiers, have access to the physical and intellectual imperviousness that allows them independence from Fortune; when Junius falls in love, he becomes emasculated and decides that he has no power to shun his fortune (2.2.49-50). Those who lack discretion rely on the favour of Fortune. Penyus, who has become a 'Briton coward', blames Fortune for abusing him (3.5.168-69). The killing of Hengo by Judas is associated with Fortune (5.3.137, 162-63). Bonduca's younger daughter is willing to use a trick on the Roman soldiers and 'make an easie conquest of 'em,/ If fortune favour me' (2.3.115-16). By contrast, Caratach refuses to use Fortune for victory (3.5.74-77); he feels that he does not need Fortune's favour to win. Caratach equates virtue with stability, discretion and a contempt for Fortune, qualities which are in stark contrast to feminine inconstancy and policy. Caratach's refusal to participate in the 'policie' practised by

Bonduca's daughters (3.5.58-70) is a refusal to use Machiavellian tactics. Machiavelli, Bolton points out, suggests that in order to conquer Fortune one should adapt to her whims.¹⁷ The principal skill of the prince is adjusting his nature to suit 'the character of the times', an idea echoed in the play.¹⁸ Penys displays the same refusal as Caratach to adapt himself to the circumstances; he is unable to 'weigh but the times estate' (2.1.11) and Petillius knows well that he will keep his old habit of being 'stubborn and vain glorious' (2.2.99).

The freedom and nobility of the tragic hero is guaranteed, in the play as in Stoicism, by death.¹⁹ Bonduca does succeed in making her monument as she wishes, 'in spite of Fortune' (4.4.73). Her suicide is an assertion of freedom from the slavery of chance.²⁰ As we have seen, Caratach refuses to compromise his nobility for the sake of the circumstances and so does Bonduca, who argues that there is a central core, the nobility of which cannot be affected by adversity: the Romans will never quite conquer her because they have not tied up death first (4.4.141-43). Like the Duchess of Malfi who is 'Duchess of Malfi still', Bonduca remains a queen to the end, despite her afflictions; the princely nature of herself and her daughters remains unchanged (4.4.31-42), in fact it is enhanced by death. The stillness of death turns persons into icons to be worshipped by everyone, even former enemies. The Roman grief looks as if it meant 'to woo the world and nature/ To be in love with death' (5.1.35-36). After his death, Penys is turned from a Briton coward into a 'father of

the Wars', washing off all slander from his name with his blood. In his study of the heroic image in Shakespearean tragedy, Proser goes so far as to argue that the heroic image can be sustained only in death because 'death makes it possible to abstract the nobility that was in the man and make him become a symbol of the nobility he sought to represent'.²¹ It is only after Bonduca's death that the general can fall in love with her, and even then he falls in love with her form of behaviour and spirit (4.4.121).

Death is treated like a ceremony which involves elaborate preparations by both Bonduca and Penys. Penys discusses in detail which manner of death would fit a commander of his standing. Green's argument that the halter associates Judas with Penys²² is not valid because, although Penys does consider poison and hanging, he eventually chooses the more honourable way of dying by falling on his sword. Judas is proud to say that he will 'hang like a Gentleman, and a Roman' (2.3.120), willing to forfeit life as if it were a trifle; but for a commander death is the ultimate display of nobility. Goldberg explains suicide as self-referentiality doubling back upon itself; the hero who is sui generis undoes himself.²³ A queen must die by the hand of a queen. As Antony remarks on Brutus, 'a Roman, by a Roman/ Valiantly vanquished' (5.15.57-58). The ultimate heroic feat is to die by one's own hand.

As we have seen, criticism has so far treated the play as a straightforward account of the tribulations awaiting those who insist on behaving like true gentlemen in a corrupt world. After Caratach has

demonstrated that he is a true gentleman, chivalric even against his country's own interests, he is rewarded by having his nephew slain by the enemy. However, Caratach has made it clear from the beginning of the play that his only concern is maintaining the nobility of his self, not conforming to the demands of the active life; throughout the play, Caratach asserts his independence from conventional standards of honour and success. Caratach is a Stoic not only because he recommends fortitude but also because he makes fulfilment entirely dependent on virtue, not success.²⁴ Hengo's death poses no problems for him because he sees it as the work of Fortune, not divine injustice (5.3.162-63). The ending is ambiguous only if we treat this as a morality play or a bourgeois story where the good win and the bad are punished. What makes the vision of the play Stoic is not simply Caratach's reliance on virtue and discretion instead of Fortune or his insistence on passive virtue but the separation of goodness from rewards, at least conventional ones; as Maus puts it, in the Roman moralists success fails to correlate with goodness and the outcome of events thus becomes 'morally irrelevant'.²⁵

The Stoic attitude to public life, which involved a sense of superiority and aloofness as well as an indifference to rewards which derive from Fortune such as worldly honour had been used by other Renaissance authors as a defence from the instability of high place which was subject to Fortune; the need to turn inward and to achieve mastery and freedom where they can by cultivating 'the potential of the self' stemmed from the

recognition of the precariousness of prosperity and advancement.²⁶ Bonduca transcends death by resorting to the idea of a central self which can remain unaffected, and Caratach places virtuous stability above history and politics. Through the literary representation of an aristocratic ethos which transcends national boundaries and political restrictions Fletcher creates, as in The Knight of Malta, an isolated intellectual and moral elite, united under the name of 'Roman' which in the play stands, as in Jonson's Sejanus, for anything that is 'good, gallant and great'. Caratach does not mind losing the war but cannot compromise his sense of himself as a member of a brotherhood of gentlemen. He was not the only one to interpret Stoicism in this light. Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), a Belgian theologian known for his editions of Seneca and Tacitus and caught in the intellectual battle between contending Protestants and Catholics, found Stoic universalism appealing - the old dream of universal brotherhood, citizenship of the world.²⁷ Caratach seeks the 'fellowship of all great souls' (5.3.167). Penyus' action opens up new vistas; he is now not just a general but a member of a military elite which shares a fear of not belonging. This fear is behind Caratach's need to be assimilated into Rome, Penyus' suicide when he no longer belongs and the 'male herd' mentality that Junius prefers to love. Membership of this separatist environment gives Caratach licence to criticize the failings of his own nation. By calling himself 'a Briton coward', Penyus makes honour (or the reverse) a broader community than that of the nation. The supranational nature of honour

invests the concept with a moral and mystical validity beyond the sanctions of political power or society; the same fantasy of an idealistic brotherhood is enacted in The Knight of Malta.

Fletcher suggests that it is self-contradictory for an uncompromising Stoic to be so deeply involved in grim historical necessities. As I have previously mentioned, Caratach has a Utopian desire to escape the world of violence (4.2.11-12, 5.1.16-17). At all times Caratach is preoccupied with the nobility of his soul rather than the public weal, for instance, when he frees Judas and Junius. In Julius Caesar, another Stoic, Brutus fails because 'since he judges the wisdom of a course of action not by its probable results in the world of events, but by its effects upon his peace of mind, his decisions are grave practical mistakes'.²⁸ For Caratach, policy and honour are irreconcilable, whereas for Bonduca's daughters one can win 'by any means that's lawfull' (3.5.65); lawful that is, by the standards of policy, which Caratach regards as emasculating, 'a womans wisdom' (3.5.66). Caratach sees no contradiction between serving his country and his insistence on individual virtue, but the play suggests that Stoicism is more of a form of aristocratic selfhood than a valid political stance. Caratach is tainted by the passivity and femininity of his camp, as his comparison of himself to a virgin suggests (1.1.60-62). He fights only if well-provoked, whereas Swetonius appreciates the fact that in order to fight the enemy it is necessary to hate him. For Caratach, courage can be passive, it can take the form of fortitude (1.1.79); Petillius, however,

despises the passive bravery of Penyus when he commits suicide: 'This way, for me,/ The way of toil; for thee, the way of honour' (4.3.177-78).

Bonduca is not a play about the futility of nobility in a corrupt world as Machiavelli would suggest; but neither is it an Aristotelian play suggesting that politics and ethics are one and the same thing. One question that has to be answered is whether the play should be interpreted in accordance with Bonduca's protest that mercy and love are sins in Rome and hell (4.4.12) or on the basis of Penyus' claim that in conducting public life there is no morality because duty is above pity (4.3.94-95). Penyus' motto is a Stoic principle used as a political statement. According to Seneca, Stoic politics is epitomized by the example of Fabius who 'took into consideration the well-being of the state and buried all thought of resentment and revenge and was only concerned with expediency and the fitting opportunity'. Sentimentality has no place in Stoic politics: 'only women weep and faint when something happens to their loved ones';²⁹ and Seneca adds that if one's father is slain, one should avenge him not because one grieves but because it is one's duty to do so.³⁰ The play can be seen as a series of unsuccessful attempts to separate private feeling from public causes. Junius regards conquering the heart of Bonduca's young daughter as 'a service for the Common-wealth, for honour' (3.2.4) and urges his friends to weigh 'the generall good may come' (3.4.13); Petillius is 'never wise but to himself, nor courteous,/ But where the end's his own' (3.4.7-8); Penyus also confuses his private honour with the glory

of Rome; Bonduca's daughters wish to take a private revenge to a military arena. Bonduca's desire to fight for her country becomes entangled in her private desire for revenge. She also delays going into battle because she has been looking for her daughters (3.5.53-56); but the Romans avoid mourning because this would affect the performance of their army. Yet while for the gentleman it is acceptable that he should place duty above pity, Bonduca is 'unnatural' when she does so at the end of the play. This attempt at a separation of public from private helps to explain why Caratach is presented in a positive light throughout the play although he behaves cruelly to Bonduca's daughters. I do not think that the ending of the play aims to leave us with ambivalent feelings about Caratach, as Hickman suggests. For a Stoic gentleman, even pity and blood ties are below his duty. That this is an inhuman ideal does not matter because at the camp 'any mirth,/ And any way, of any subject' is preferable to 'unmanly mustinesse' (1.2.40-42); Stoicism, a masculine and aristocratic ideal, is what makes a gentleman in the play, not Christian goodness. We interpret the play wrongly if we expect Caratach to conform to the dictates of the latter and we create an ambivalence that is simply not justified by the commentary of the play on Caratach. The ambivalence at the end of the play does not stem from Caratach's personality itself but the tensions in his philosophy when it is faced with the grim realities of political survival.

C. 'Discretion/ And hardie Valour are the twins of Honour'

By contrast with Caratach, the Romans do not think that virtue or philosophy are relevant to leadership. Petillius treats Penyus' suicide, which he has encouraged, as a weakness; and when Junius attempts to conquer his feelings in a typically Stoic manner by stating that 'all our appetites are but as dreams/ Wee laugh at in our ages', he is ironically labelled by Petillius as a 'sweet Philosopher' (2.2.20-21). Unlike Caratach, the Romans realize that they cannot have in war, which is used in the play as a metonymy for any public cause that should override personal affections and interests, the same values as in peace. In a military context, Petillius can be forgiven for urging Penyus to commit suicide because, despite the fact that he is not a morally aware man, he is a good soldier and a good servant of the public weal; taking Caratach is a deed that can remove all faults of all natures (5.3.69-70). Modesty, a moral quality, is rejected by Petillius, not as an invalid standard for life in general but as unbecoming for a soldier (1.2.14-16); gentlemen do not make better warriors because valour can be impeded as well as enhanced by discretion and courtesy. It is because this is a military context that 'policie' can sidestep honour, Bonduca's daughters seem to suggest to Caratach, which he refuses to accept. In Coriolanus Volumnia tells Coriolanus that he should use policy in his treatment of the citizens because

If it be honour in your wars to seem
 The same you are not, which for your best ends
 You adopt policy, how is it less or worse
 That it shall hold companionship in peace
 With honour, as in war, since that to both
 It stands in like request?

(3.2.48-53)

Volumnia has often heard Coriolanus say that 'honour and policy, like unsevered friends,/ I'th war do grow together' (3.2.43-44). Yet Caratach sees no difference between war and peace.

Although Caratach believes that Rome embodies all his ideals of noble power, of valour tempered with courtesy and discretion (1.1.115-39), the Roman reality is different. In the following scene, Swetonius, the Roman general, does not endorse this ideal without qualification. Petillius tells Swetonius that he has learnt the following wisdom from him, that it is important to save life and to combine war tactics with discretion, otherwise mere Fortune may claim the victory, which is similar to Caratach's ideal. Swetonius replies that this is so indeed but not always; where Fortune has cut off all opportunities, swords are the only thing that matters. To win is nothing when one has time and reason on one's side; the victories that matter are those where mutinies, want and destruction are against the soldier:

Here, how to save, is losse; to be wise, dangerous;
 Onely a present well-united strength,
 And mindes made up for all attempts, dispatch it:
 Disputing and delay here, cools the courage.

(1.2.232-35)

In such cases,

There is no other wisdom nor discretion
 Due to this day of ruine, but destruction.

(1.2.245-46)

The kind of valour Swetonius advocates is not noble but expedient. It should not, however, be confused with the policy and opportunism of Judas and Bonduca's daughters; to him, it is only a matter of strategy. The Roman view of valour suggests that manhood is at its best when moral nuances can be evaded; there are cases when 'how to save, is losse; to be wise dangerous'. The more unrestrained a soldier is by courtesy, the more destructive he will be and therefore the more likely to win. It is not that the Romans make an ethically unacceptable choice. Rather, they evade moral responsibility by suggesting that in certain circumstances it may not be possible to have time for a choice at all; valour takes over all reason. The blind force of tigers replaces the discretion of foxes (1.2.242). It is this sense of context that gives Swetonius the victory. An insistence on codes can result in a lack of a sense of context. Both Penyus and Caratach tend to live by codes: of military glory, of courtesy, of honour, which they refuse

to adjust to the circumstances or people around them. This indicates a lack of discretion. Penyus displays the same refusal as Caratach to adapt himself to the circumstances; he insists on being addressed with all due courtesy, regardless of the critical circumstances. Penyus is unable to 'weigh but the times estate' (2.1.11), and so is Caratach.

To Caratach, Rome is brotherhood, noble fair-play and courtesy, not betrayal and scheming, although there is room for both views. In discussing Shakespeare's Romes, Miola points out that in most of Shakespeare's plays Rome is 'a noble place of high heroic deeds and honour, as well as a sordid centre of selfish scheming and political infighting'.³¹ The same duality can be found in the Rome of Bonduca. Like Junius, the Roman captain besotted with love, Caratach confuses appearance with reality. Junius falls in love with Bonduca's younger daughter on the basis of her appearance (2.2.24-31). Similarly, Caratach declares his erotic attraction to Rome in the opening scene (57-62), where he also reveals his admiration for the ability to preserve a noble bearing. Both Junius and Caratach can love the enemy by confusing superficial distinctions with substantial ones. In 5.1 Caratach acknowledges for the first time a disparity between Roman manners and Roman nature; the glories of the Romans make 'even pride a vertue in ye' (43). To judge a person or an ideal on the basis of the senses indicates a lack of discretion.

Courtesy depends on discretion, a sense of context which allows one to evaluate people and circumstances and react accordingly. It is fair

to say that the play suggests, like Montaigne, that there should be moderation even in moderation. In the administration of public affairs Caratach's Stoic indifference is rejected; different people or events require different treatment. Judas, whom Caratach treats like an equal, is shown to be incapable of the reciprocity that binds the commanders together; hence discretion in the sense of distinguishing is necessary. In Fletcher's time, discretion meant not only prudence/sound judgement but also retained the meaning of distinguishing; it implied arriving at a correct judgement through the ability to distinguish between one thing and another (OED, I.1 & III.6). Caratach's discretion is in fact a lack of discretion, an inability to draw distinctions. The Romans treat common soldiers with contempt, but Caratach refers to Judas and his companions as 'fellows' (2.3.41, 2.3.112). He is unable to differentiate between common soldiers and commanders (2.3.75-76); and he believes that both ranks will make a battle worth winning (2.3.43-45, 3.5.62-65). After Caratach has treated him to a good meal, Judas feels that he is an equal with Caratach and a gentleman (2.4.52-64). In the Roman camp, however, only the commanders are addressed as gentlemen (3.2.54, 3.5.109); and, unlike Caratach, Decius would not hesitate to hang Judas (2.4.44). The duality of Rome means that although Rome wins thanks to Judas and soldiers like him, it is not affected by his devious ways. Having kept their distance from the soldiers they use for their victories, the Roman generals can preserve Rome and themselves noble. Junius tells Judas to use no foul play in taking Caratach; Macer

agrees that he deserves fair play. Judas, however, sets his cynicism against the sprezzatura of his superiors and punctures their pretences to aristocratic reciprocity:

What should I do there then? you are brave Captains,

Most valiant men; go up your selves; use vertue,

See what wil come on't.

(5.2.121-23)

D. 'All noble Battels/ Maintain'd in thirst of honour, not of blood'

In Fletcher's source, Plutarch, valour is the primary virtue: 'valiantness was honoured in Rome above all other virtues: which they called Virtus, by the name of virtue itself'.³² For Caratach, however, valour is not the only virtue that matters. Caratach defines honour as his right to preserve his sense of self rather than as a reward for conformity to authority or an external standard. He refuses to relinquish what is for him his sense of self. His mirror character in the opposite camp is stubborn and disobedient to his superiors. Like Penyus, he looks upon war as an opportunity to display his heroism and acquire honour. Like the knight, he often cultivates his virtues not for the benefit of his queen or country but as the sine qua non for personal fulfilment.³³ In the opening scene he suggests that the essence of honour is to treat an enemy nobly and to recognize his worth; it is not a code for public action but personal superiority. In the scene which follows it is established that the Romans treat honour as a military ideal, a name one gains by facing dangers in battle. This view is later summed up as 'more wounds, more honour' (3.5.122). For the Romans honour can only be acquired by facing danger and winning, which means that victory should be sought at all costs. For Caratach victory is not an overriding consideration and it does not in itself confer honour; there are battles which are worth our

winning, noble battles, and those which are not. Noble battles are carried out in thirst of honour, not of blood (5.1.66-67).

The obsession with courtesy and honourable fighting can also be found on the other side. Penys is described by Drusus as brave but haughty (2.1.120-21); but Penys' attitude is more than plain haughtiness. He will only fight man-to-man, in the manner of chivalry. His men are noble warriors, not 'food/ To stop the jaws of all those hungry wolfs' (2.1.18-19). Penys is not a coward; he scorns his life but he is afraid of losing his name (2.1.31). He does not wish to turn himself and his soldiers into cannon-fodder; there is no glory when one is smothered with a multitude (2.1.35-37). His name is his self, and when his name perishes, he commits suicide. Losing his honour is 'losse of whole man in me' (4.3.85). Despite the effusions of military professionalism, the heroic ethic of these supermen has a core of puerile bad temper. Penys behaves like a child, frighteningly easy to manipulate. Penys has been extolled for his nobility and contrasted with Bonduca, yet commentators who praise him and emphasize the nobility of his suicide over that of Bonduca³⁴ often ignore the fact that this scene is one of pure comedy building up to a suicide caused by Petillius' careful manipulation. Like his dishonour, Penys' suicide is caused by a lack of discretion which results in an inflexible insistence on the military code of honour and a lack of insight into Petillius' motives. The same stubbornness that critics see as heroic is the object of bets in the camp. The fearless warriors can become children when faced

with the disapproval of their comrades because they have no private sense of themselves. Penyus feels that he will now be pointed at with fingers: 'That's he,/ That's the brave Gentleman forsook the battel' (4.3.14-15). Even the composed Petillius can be affected by the general malady: he wishes to be killed by Junius because his service has passed unrewarded by the general (5.3.46-50). Roman valour is always for a public cause; Penyus is 'a Briton coward' (3.5.165). Like the women on the British side, Penyus confuses the public with the private, his glory and that of Rome.

I would agree with Green's statement that both Bonduca and Penyus display the same individualistic attitude to honour,³⁵ but at the same time, what motivates Penyus, Bonduca and the Roman commanders is a complete loss of individuality. The state demands - and gets - absolute, mechanistic obedience in return for status. Penyus kills himself because

...examples that may nourish

Neglect and disobedience in whole bodies,

And totter the estates and faiths of armies,

Must not be plaid withal; nor out of pitie

Make a General forget his duty.

(4.3.91-95)

The Romans act like automata rather than godheads of war. There is a sense of a sancrosanct hierarchy operating. The Roman stage is populated with officers who execute the orders of their superiors without the slightest

divergence from military decorum; Curius is advised by Drusus to mitigate Penyus' refusal when he reports it to the general (2.1.124-25). Penyus eventually pays for his mutiny with his life because his disobedience could set a precedent (4.3.91-94); the Roman captains compete before Swetonius for declarations of valour before a deadly battle; and if Junius does not quickly forget the enemy's daughter, he will feel his general's anger (1.2.271-73). The emphasis on order is overwhelming. Rome sanctifies all atrocities, but in return demands the obedience of an automaton. Ignoble valour is that of a man who fights 'either drunk or desperate' (4.3.49); but Romans fight in this manner. The Romans' courage is very much the result of a lack of humanity and moral awareness. The official Roman attitude to death is one of utter denial (1.2.204-209). Petillius and Demetrius simply do not think of dying, and Petillius can even make jokes on death and crippledness (2.2). As Petillius observes, resolute hunger knows no fear and danger (2.2.80-82).

Caratach is also tainted by the obsession with self-dramatization that can be seen in Penyus and Bonduca. At all times he is preoccupied not with how he feels but how his actions will appear to the enemy; what matters is not one's fortune but how one bears it (1.1.20). When he allows Judas to live, Caratach does so as a magnanimous man, not as a good Christian. He may appear to take mercy on Judas' hunger, but he is also concerned about losing the glory of the day (2.3.43-45). Like Demetrius in The Humorous Lieutenant, Caratach worries that he has been surpassed

in courtesy. Caratach feels compelled to behave magnanimously because by doing so he asserts his superiority; he becomes an equal with the Roman Penys and bestows a favour on the inferior Judas who is a 'poor knave'. His nobility is compulsive; he does not allow himself to forget that he is a gentleman. Each one of his actions must bespeak his position regardless of context (1.1.20-31, 2.3.42-45, 3.5.63-80). As we have seen, even death becomes part of this need to dramatize superiority.

E. 'The war loves danger, danger drink, drink discipline,/ Which is society and lechery'

War in the play operates at two different levels, that of the commanders and that of the common soldiers. For the common soldier war remains, in the play as in reality, a prosaic and physical matter, rather than an elevated state which transports body and soul together. For the gentleman-soldier valour is a pleasure above that of love, and one which only superior minds can appreciate (1.1.56-62); it is a spiritual thing. For Judas, 'good bits afford good blows' (1.2.101). The danger of war provides a kind of ecstasy which allows the warriors to transcend themselves; this transcendence is similar to that provided by fraternization, sex or drink. In love, as in the ecstasy of battle, distinction and individuality are lost. As a result, war, lechery, danger and discipline are associated (1.2.34-36). Caratach longs to be subjected to the power of such a noble enemy and partake of Roman nobility (1.1.60-62). For these generals, war is a quasi-erotic activity of masculine bonding; and they take pleasure in war, destructive though it is (1.1.56-62). The ecstasy of battle and danger helps them transcend themselves and achieve a union with their comrades. Caratach seeks this union, not the victory; hence the image of fighting as union rather than competition. A love for honour, like death, unites even enemies (5.1.44-49). The grandeur that Caratach wishes to share is that of the universe, not of a nation; his aspirations reach beyond Britain. A result

of this fraternization is that war is waged as an exchange of courtesies. Caratach feels obliged to Penysus for allowing him to escape with Hengo, and at the end of the play he submits 'not to your blowes, but your brave courtesies' (5.3.188).

Junius' decision to have war as his mistress associates him with Caratach who, at the beginning of the play, states that

Yellow-tressed *Hymen*

Ne'er ty'd a longing Virgin with more joy,

Then I am married to that man that wounds me.

(1.1.60-62)

Military gentlemen share a bond which verges on the erotic; their association with other men presupposes their freedom from the sexual needs that are found in the common sort and are seen only as a distraction from the superior mission they have to pursue (2.2.87-88, 4.1.11-28). The frustrated Roman captain in love with Bonduca's daughter substitutes war for sex (4.1.30-50): as in *Othello*, 'it is at the expense of love that war is idealized'.³⁶ When Petillius wonders 'are we gods,/ Alli'd to no infirmities?' (4.3.76-77), Penysus replies that this is so indeed. In the Roman culture, tenderness is unnatural; 'mercie and love are sins in *Rome* and hell' (4.4.12). Junius' desire to fight bravely is not noble, as it comes from a frustrated love that has been transformed into hate. Anger replaces love, and it is only then that Junius can fight. The rejection of love in the play is celebrated not only as a return to health and safety, as Leech observes.³⁷ It

is also treated as a sign of aptitude for rule, the primary duty of a gentleman. At the end of the play Junius, having rejected love, is promoted to the position of general, whereas when in love he was only 'fit to command young goslings' (2.2.88). The man who cannot command his passions is not apt at commanding others. As in The Knight of Malta, the rejection of love accompanies the attainment of higher status. Lovers, boys and fools are associated because they are all asexual and belong to social groups which lack any claims to leadership and authority (2.2.57-59). Love is equated with a loss of status (2.2.62-64). The gentleman must substitute war for women because he must love only things he can rule (2.2.28-31).

The Romans' desire to destroy and kill is very close to lust; they can only possess through destruction. The arrows of Cupid are transformed into the arrows of death (3.5.45). The desire to destroy has become the only way they can express themselves; for Junius erotic frustration results in fury and destruction, and so does dishonour (1.2.243-44). Love becomes more exciting through obstacles and resistance and therefore rape or loving one's enemy become suitable forms of expressing this urge. For Petillius, the woman is to be destroyed like the enemy. He does not like great ladies because they cannot withstand handling; he prefers prostitutes: 'give me a thing I may crush' (4.1.41). Sex is war for them, and the reverse. Resistance prolongs pleasure, so the best battles are those which are more difficult (1.2.225-31). Underestimating the enemy reduces one's own sense of achievement; consequently, it is dishonour to belittle

the Romans (1.1.82-84). The enemies are the registers on which the British fame and honour will be written. Caratach wishes to allow an enemy 'both weight and worth' because this allows him to magnify the British victory. He does not wish to kill Judas because

...who shall fight against us, make our honours,

And give a glorious day into our hands,

If we dispatch our foes thus?

(2.3.43-45)

Conversely, Caratach makes Rome's glory grow (5.3.195).

F. The Historical Context: Pacifist King, Military Gentlemen

Bonduca exploits classical and military ideals to provide a critique of contemporary political and military conditions. The revival of the ideals associated with militant Rome is a response to the political and military crisis of the period; the representation of the gentleman protagonist is shaped by contemporary attitudes to James's pacifism, Spain and court morality. Gurr notes that between 1587 and the end of the century, militarism and hostility to Spain affected the kind of great figures presented on stage in this period. He argues that the militarism which set sail in England during the Armada lent a new realism to stage figures, supplying them with great verse, powerful personalities and immense personal challenges to face. He interprets the creation of Tamburlaine, Faustus and the hero of The Spanish Tragedy as the fortuitous result of mass emotion and powerful 'personation'.³⁸ Such emphasis on the masculine affairs of war and military history could serve as the outlet for nationalistic emotion, which in its turn could legitimize violence; I have examined earlier how both Caratach and the Romans share Tamburlaine's subversive discourse. Under conditions of national emergency, and Bonduca was created within the context of a renewed emphasis on the Spanish threat, an admiration for violence can easily flourish. In order to understand the military representation of gentility in Bonduca, it is necessary to examine the historical context which generated it.

The bias in favour of the Roman camp and the unflattering treatment of Britain and her queen Bonduca have been pointed out but remain unexplained.³⁹ In the play, Britain is presented in a state of military decline and is defeated by Rome. The Roman, masculine ways of the past constituted the kind of virtue that the king had marginalized. James had an aversion for all military things.⁴⁰ One of the thematic contrasts in the play is the axis of Stoic philosophy, the antithesis between pleasure and virtue.⁴¹ The cyclical concept of history inherited from classical sources suggested that excessive prosperity will tend to corrupt a society and bring about its downfall.⁴² Unless Britain relinquishes its softness for Roman, masculine and military ideals, its decline is inevitable. The Roman appeals to Fletcher as an alternative mode of aristocratic self-dramatization because the values it signifies, moderation, self-discipline, fortitude, integrity and austerity, could be grafted on the ethics of the British gentleman and restore his lost dignity.

It is significant to note that not only does the play castigate the lack of military values on the British side, it does so by employing James's own discourse on war. The culture of the Jacobean court and James's attempt to project an image of himself as a king of peace in his speech of 1604 to the Parliament would not have been enough to establish an image of the period as one of effeminacy, even by contrast with Elizabeth's era, without James's pacifist policy at a time when war seemed inevitable, at least to some of his contemporaries. James's theory on fighting was not uniformly

pacific; the play chooses to utilize the king's own military tactics expounded in Basilikon Doron (1599). In this work, James stresses the need for a commander to exhibit moderation: he that cannot rule himself cannot be thought worthy to rule others;⁴³ in Bonduca, Junius becomes capable of commanding others only after he has conquered his passion for Bonduca's younger daughter. The commander has greater responsibilities than the common soldier, since 'your fault shall be aggrauated, according to the height of your dignitie' because a leader's sin is 'an exemplare sinne, and therefore drawing with it the whole multitude to be guiltie of the same';⁴⁴ in the play Penius commits suicide because he has been a bad example to the common soldier and may disturb order. James advises Prince Henry to consult with no prophet upon the success of his wars,⁴⁵ which recalls Bonduca's superstitious evocation of the gods. He also suggests that Prince Henry should not pray for unlawful things such as revenge and lust.⁴⁶ He expects his son to behave like a Stoic and to imitate the virtues of the Romans.⁴⁷ He then goes on to praise the discipline of the Spaniards:

And looke to the *Spaniard*, whose great successe
 in all his warres, hath onely come through
 straitnesse of Discipline and order.

.....

Be in your owne person walkrife, diligent, and
 painefull.

.....

Be cold and foreseeing in deusing, constant in
your resolutions, and forward and quicke in
your executions.⁴⁸

The terms used by James I to praise the Spaniards could also describe the key Romans in Bonduca. Their quickness in acting because 'disputing and delay here, cools the courage' (1.2.235), assaulting with strategy and wisdom, the example that the Roman commanders provide for soldiers, the emphasis on discipline, all can be found in James's work.

This, however, does not sufficiently account for the bias in favour of Rome in the play. It should also be noted that the Roman empire based its power on a strong army, and the so-called Pax Romana was in fact a continuous readiness for war. This was a virtue the Britain of Fletcher's time lacked. In 1612, Boynton informs us, the earl of Hertford declared that the trained bands in his lieutenancy had forgotten their former discipline because of their 'long vacation and rest'; from 1613 therefore there was a noticeable increase in military activity, and it was then that the vogue for military gardens spread, for gentlemen to exercise themselves in the arts of war.⁴⁹ Early in 1613 the government feared an invasion from Spain. This drove home the lack of military alertness and also the fact that what Caratach calls 'the peace of Honour' could only be achieved on condition that 'in our ends, our swords' (1.1.171). Many informed Englishmen saw the Jacobean peace as a momentary respite while Spain recovered her

strength and attempted to divide Protestant Europe.⁵⁰ Even if an immediate war was not warranted, military preparedness appeared to be essential. Si vas pacem, para bellum (if you want peace, prepare for war) is the underlying statement of the play, along with the recognition that peace is not always desirable. Caratach tells Bonduca to practise the 'peace of Honour', which means that 'in our ends, our swords' (1.1.171). Again, the distinction between honourable and dishonourable war and peace can be traced back to James's work: an honourable war is preferable to a dishonourable peace.⁵¹ When Nennius naively asks 'is not Peace the end of Arms?' Caratach replies that this is so in petty causes but not

...where we grapple for the ground we live on,

The Libertie we hold as dear as life,

The gods we worship, and next those, our Honours.

(1.1.159-61)

Peace with Spain remained unpopular in the country; England had lost a great deal of honour from her failure to subdue the Spanish arrogance.⁵² The Spanish proposal of a marriage alliance with England was accompanied by generous financial offers, but religion remained a serious obstacle.⁵³ In Bonduca there is great emphasis on the fact that the Roman spirit overcomes material limitations. Caratach observes that no concessions can be made where 'we grapple for the gods we worship'; and Junius regards the fact that he loves a woman of the enemy camp as reprehensible because 'she hates our Nation' (2.2.35). James himself

advises his son not to marry a woman of a different religion.⁵⁴ Therefore the misogyny of the play is not simply due to an 'endorsement of patriarchal values' as Clark explains it in her analysis of the play.⁵⁵

In conclusion, the representation of the gentle self in Bonduca is affected by the political and military problems of the period. As in The Knight of Malta, criticism of contemporary heroic ideals (or perhaps the lack of them) is voiced through the evocation of a more heroic past. In response to what were often perceived to be the signs of decline, the play dramatizes a Britain corrupted by prosperity and sloth, where words exceed actions (1.1.21-38) and a Rome where words are matched by actions (1.2.181-90, 235). The king is reminded of the discrepancy between his writings on war and his policies because, as Caratach remarks to Bonduca, what we say must not exceed what we do (1.1.35). Hengo, whom Hickman considers to represent Prince Henry,⁵⁶ is educated to become a military gentleman in a world which operates by the principles which the king had established for his own son. Caratach's obituary for Hengo is a tribute to the hopes for a revival of the military and aristocratic ideals that were lost with Prince Henry's death. The response to an unheroic political environment is an emphasis on the self and its ability to master external influences like Fortune.

Bonduca and The Knight of Malta also share a concern with the relationship of valour to political expediency. The importance of 'discretion', a wise judgement that allows one to distinguish between different people

and situations in Bonduca, and the epistemological worries about the nature of perception and inwardness in The Knight of Malta suggest the problematic relationship of codes of conduct to both individual subjectivity and reality. Similar concerns with subjectivity, truth and the interpretation of codes of conduct are seen in other plays. In The Little French Lawyer the ability to temper obedience to strict codes of conduct with a sense of context is seen as the essence of courtesy. The Nice Valour and The Wild-Goose Chase also underline the necessity of avoiding both slavish obedience to codes of conduct and subjectivism.

CHAPTER TWO

The Knight of Malta (1616-18)¹: Chivalric Gentility

A. True and False Gentility

The major - and typical - critical contribution to The Knight of Malta is that of Rose who summarizes the play as a conflict between chivalric heroism and sexual love which are 'realigned according to a newly established centrality of private experience'. She argues that the play does not explore chivalry as an idealized mode of being flexible enough to command the emulation of an entire society, but instead surrounds it with 'an aura of anachronism and irrelevance.'² This assumes an audience that had already distanced itself from chivalry and a play removed from contemporary reference. However, The Knight of Malta is a play which consciously revives chivalry as a contrast to the unchivalric courtly mores. Military zeal is exalted as the groundwork of gentility; even servants must display their wounds before they go into service. The withdrawal of chivalric imagery from public representations of courtliness does not necessarily suggest that chivalry was seen as outdated; its revival could have political implications and to appreciate this it is useful to set chivalry in a historical perspective and look at the position it held in the new pacifist regime.

Peace was the centrepiece of the king's image. Not only was peace one of his deep-seated principles, it had also been granted to him by God,

as if it were an indication of the divine origin of his birthright. In his first speech to the Parliament in 1604, James stated that

I haue euer, I praise God, yet kept Peace and amitie with all,
which hath bene so farre tyed to my person, as at my comming
here you are witnesses I found the State embarqued in a great
and tedious warre, and onely by mine arriual here, and by the
Peace in my Person, is now amitie kept, where warre was
before, which is no smal blessing to a Christian
Common-wealth.³

God had blessed James with offspring in order to ensure the propagation of his 'undoubted right' and the perpetuity of the blessings of 'Inward and Outward Peace'.⁴ Poems written to celebrate the king's accession to the throne hail James as a king of peace. James's ancestors are described as 'that Regall Race' which 'to peace restored first/ This Land'; Samuel Daniel remarks that 'religion comes with Thee, Peace, Righteousness, Judgement, and Justice'; Henry Petowe calls him 'the king of Peace and Plentie'.⁵ On the other hand, it was also obvious that the new king made little effort to fit in with the image of a warlike medieval knight, champion of his country's interests and faith. Francis Osborne in his Traditionall Memoyres on the Raigne of King James I remarks that

I shall leave him dres'd to posterity in the colours I saw him
in the next progresse after his inauguration, which was as

greene as the grasse he trod on, with a fether in his cap,
and a horne instead of a sword by his side: how sutable to
his age, calling, or person, I leave to others to judge from
his pictures.⁶

The idea persisted that high status should include at least a semblance of militarism. As Selden observed in Titles of Honour (1631), in Europe a gentleman was one who was a soldier, or 'readie vpon occasion to be one'.⁷ Even James's glorification of peace could do little to alter the deep-rooted belief that a gentleman was one who wore a sword. As Finkelpearl puts it, to many upper-class Jacobean it was not clear that the Age of Chivalry was dead.⁸ Many seventeenth-century gentlemen still liked to think of themselves as medieval knights, as the continuing popularity of tilting indicates. The renewed fashion for military activities in 1610 suggests that a gentleman was still thought of as a military leader. Three Englishmen, among them Francis Bacon, worked on treatises urging all Christians to exchange their doctrinal differences for a common holy war against the Turks.⁹ As late as 1630, Brathwait recommends fighting against the Turk as the noblest occupation for a gentleman (EG, p.145) and regards the knights of Malta as one of the examples worthy to be followed by the English gentleman (p.144). This may not mean that the readers were expected to drop everything and sign up for a holy war, but it does indicate that gentlemen were still represented as chivalric idealists and that the image of chivalry in the play would not have appeared as outdated as

Rose would have us think. The ethos of chivalry could be relevant in situations beyond holy wars.

The play recalls the relief of Malta in 1565, an occasion which had been the cause of a great deal of celebration in England, instigated by Queen Elizabeth herself. Smuts provides a description of the revival of medieval styles and themes which had left a profound imprint on late Elizabethan culture and notes that such imagery virtually disappeared from court masques, except those written for James's warlike son Henry.¹⁰ Like chivalry, the insistence on chastity as an upper-class ideal could lend itself to subversive uses. It was Elizabeth's reign that had combined the chivalric ideal in the sense of martial prowess with neoplatonic idealism;¹¹ Prince Henry, who had made a conscious attempt to revive the Elizabethan ideals in the Jacobean court, included chastity among his virtues.¹² Roy Strong informs us that the atmosphere of the palaces at St James's and Richmond was more like that of a Puritan monastery than what we would describe as a Jacobean court.¹³ Prince Henry's attempt to revive the ideals and forms of chivalric gentility was a reaction to his father's unchivalric court. Restoring the forms was the stepping stone to restoring the ideals, which may explain why Sir Anthony Weldon had found the feathers on James's cap so disappointing. Prince Henry had revived both the ideals in his conduct and the forms that expressed them in his investiture in 1609; but in 1614 James created the first knights without investiture, a fact that signalled the complete detachment of the new gentleman from the dignified

formalities of the old days and, by implication, from the glorious deeds and ideals of the past they represented. The emphasis of the play on the ritualistic elements of knighthood underlines a belief in the importance of forms for the ideals. Only Abdella regards Christian rituals as 'superstitious ceremonies' (4.4.33).

There could be little doubt that the Jacobean society had declined from the glorious days of Elizabeth when the nobility and gentry consisted, as in the play, of 'men of whose birth and qualifications there could be no question'.¹⁴ The Knight of Malta voices an anxiety about the relationship between gentility and duty in the period and the increasing availability of honour to 'every cheap desert' (1.1.122). The sale of honours at a low price could only aggravate the anxiety of established gentry about increased social mobility. The lack of a substantive role for the class also contributed to the blurring of social distinctions. In the absence of war, administrative duties were the major duty of a gentleman, but this could easily degenerate into a means of exercising power rather than serving the community. It was now possible to be only half-heartedly involved in the welfare of the country, to be a gentleman and no gentleman. It was therefore necessary to distinguish not only between the gentleman and the plebeian but also true from false gentility, to 'make true gentrie knowne/ From the fictitious' (Ben Jonson, The Gypsies Metamorphosed, 621-22).

The improbable feats of military commanders on the Jacobean stage are not only the corollary of the genre in which the dramatists were writing

or the decline of Elizabethan drama. One obvious way of coping with the growing sense in the period that gentility had become too easy to acquire, it had been 'made good cheape',¹⁵ was to represent on stage, as in the conduct books, what it should involve. The butt of satire is now Lapet, the cowardly 'gentleman' in The Nice Valour, not Hotspur. For a new position to supersede rival ideologies, it needs to become dogmatic and extreme, as often the plays do. It is the same 'weakness' that the conduct books suffer from: they aim more to establish an ideal and less to depict a reality, but in doing so it is inevitable that both texts provide indirect commentary on the historical conditions which generated them and give us clues to the social realities that they are trying to nudge aside. Brathwait chooses to express his contempt for what he terms gentility that 'tastes too much of the Mushrom' (EG, p.61). The Knight of Malta takes the course of presenting an ideal gentleman and exploring his reactions in situations where a seventeenth-century 'mushroom gentleman' was very unlikely to find himself and, more importantly, be qualified to cope with them. In both cases, the commentary on social upstarts is scant and dismissive, as if such things did not matter, as if the true gentleman were so far above his ambitious counterpart that there was no danger of mistaking one for the other. Bloody battles, or even bloodless duels, make good touchstones for gentility. In practice, however, things were very different and, as Sir Thomas Smith informs us, a gentleman could often be defined as 'one who will beare the port, charge and countenance of a genteman',¹⁶ or, as

Selden remarks, 'one that is reputed one'.¹⁷ The sale of honours under the Stuarts exacerbated the situation by rendering service irrelevant to gentility. This was, in Peacham's words, 'very prejudicial to true nobility and politic government' because

who will hazard his person and estate to infinite dangers for honour when others at home may have it sine sudore et sanguine (without sweat and blood) only by bleeding in the vena cava called marsupium (hollow vein called money-bag).

(CG, p.26).

In 1630 Brathwait associates great place with duty rather than privilege: 'the higher place, the heavier charge' and repeats Bacon's observation in his essay 'Of Great Place' (1612) that men in great places are 'thrice servants; servants of the Soveraigne, or State; servants of Fame; and servants of Businesse' (EG, p.115); 'in the greatest fortune, there is the least libertie' (EG, p.117). Whereas before the gentleman was defined by his superiority to the rest of society, now it is service to the community that makes a gentleman.

The Knight of Malta anticipates this shift in emphasis from superiority to service. Norandine has offered blood and money to the Order (1.3.9-10). The knights receive spoil of symbolic value only and prefer to live in poverty; they are rewarded with status and personal fulfilment, whereas the soldiers fight for money and women. The sacrificial element of the gentle ethos is underlined; the knights undertake difficult tasks with

masochistic relish. It is very appropriate that the form of love acceptable for a knight is courtly love, as it is also sacrificial: although a soldier may neglect himself, he will keep his mistress 'in full lustre' (3.2.70-73). The plays tend to emphasize the burdens of great place and suppress the privileges: officers, courtiers and kings, all complain about the responsibilities that their place entails. Gentility is now a state to be borne with fortitude rather than a privileged position and service taken for granted as a natural part of it. Miranda tells Gomera that

Why every Gentleman would have done as much
 As you did: fought it: that's a poore desert, sir,
 They are bound to that.

(2.5.131-33)

Chivalry helps reintroduce the idea of service and restore the meaning and context of those symbols whose wider circulation had 'made good cheape', as conduct book authors complained. The honour of becoming a knight is the recognition of a long period of service. The title of knight is

...the period
 To all our labours, the extremity
 Of that tall pyramid, where honour hangs,
 Which we with sweat and agony have reach'd,
 And should not then so easily impart

So bright a wreath to every cheap desert.

(1.1.117-22)

The value of the honour is also affected by the recipient, who should be carefully selected: the dignity is dignified by Miranda (1.3.32). According to Castiglione, the grace of the gentleman stems from the air of carelessness and effortlessness with which he performs all his actions, however difficult in reality. However, in the play there is nothing of the easy heroism of Castiglione. The gentlemen here have weight; tasks are undertaken and seen through with seriousness and a sense of responsibility that were beginning to fade in real life; effort is stressed. Eligibility for membership in the social elite of the Order can be achieved only by facing, as the most renowned knights often did, ugly dangers. Their grace derives not from a relaxed abandonment in the freedom of their privileged social position but from a strict self-discipline and unwavering loyalty.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that although the play's chivalry connects private honour with public duty, it does not diminish the importance of lineage. Although the effort and achievement of the knights are stressed, the play supports the view of gentility from birth; or, rather, reconciles the two by showing that it is only the man of noble birth who has the capacity for such achievement. Only gentlemen can enter the Order (1.3.93-94). Gentility is based on moral virtue but virtue comes only from noble birth. The expectations which the social position of the protagonists creates are verified by the action. Miranda is first introduced to us as a

gentleman 'royally descended' and later we learn about his military feats, as if all his other qualities naturally emanated from his social position. We are asked to place him socially before we have received any information on his personal worth. The play operates in a similar way with Mountferrat. Before seeing him calumniate Oriana, we learn in the first scene, in his rather obnoxious paroxysm of narcissism, that he is of humble origin and has attained his position through 'neither favour, nor births priviledge' (1.1.22); when he is eventually proved to be a villain, his conduct is made to appear as a natural consequence of his social position. In both Mountferrat and Miranda our expectations are channelled in a specific direction and verified by the action. The expectations which the manners of the protagonists create are in agreement with their actions. Mountferrat, who has 'neither favour, nor births priviledge' (1.1.22) is eventually expelled from the Order. Chivalry is used as a means of reappropriating the traditional insignia of status to those well-established in their position. The play resists the separation of blood and virtue; it is disrespectful to allow 'every cheap desert' to bear the insignia of chivalry.

The play uses chivalry in deliberate contrast to certain qualities of the courtly gentility of the age, which is why I disagree with Rose's argument that the play depicts chivalric values as outdated. These qualities are sensuality, conspicuous consumption, devaluation of noble birth, effeminacy, pride and the prioritizing of individualism over idealism. The soldiers who have not shown themselves brave in battle are advised to

go to the taverns and win battles there (2.1.120-24). Drinking is associated with the decline of military skills (3.1.45-47) and England (2.1.87-90, 5.1.17-19). In addition, there are several jokes against knighthood in other countries (1.2.57-59 and 1.3.48-54); there are poor knights elsewhere - but those are social climbers who have bought honours, not, as in the play, gentlemen who follow a practice of common ownership. The Order does not just ask

...no other ornaments

Then other countries glittering show, poor pride,

A gingling spur, a feather, a white hand,

A frizled hayre, powder'd, perfumes, and lust,

Drinking sweet wines, surfeits, and ignorance.

(1.3.49-53)

As the passage suggests, the equation of spirituality with social distinction serves to invalidate courtliness. The appropriation of the symbols of knighthood does not make a gentleman; a gentleman is one who has the right consciousness, 'pure thoughts, and a gatherd minde' (1.3.46). Lust and ignorance are associated, whereas those who are chaste are praised for their wise judgement (1.3.56). Gentility is ineffable and lies in the mind, not in 'glittering show'. It is this internal stability that is contrasted with the superficial accomplishments of the court. Miranda is praised for his 'staid, and mature judgement'. The Order requires a 'gatherd minde', one which 'time, nor all occasions ever may/ After disperse, or staine' (1.3.46-48). As

in Bonduca, the idea is encountered of nobility lying in the mind, of a central core that remains impervious to the temptations and accidents of the world.

Chivalry helps the play to lay renewed emphasis on the concept that gentility means conforming to a moral code, not just power and graceful externals. The contrast between the worldly honour of the court and the spiritual glory of God was a favourite with authors eager to attack court culture, like Brathwait, who observed that courtly glory, as opposed to spiritual glory, is brittle (EG, p.37); or Fletcher's Puritan patron, the Earl of Huntingdon, who felt moral revulsion for the court's 'glittering misery'.¹⁸ The insistence on spirituality in the play is a way of disparaging the brittle gentility of the Jacobean court as opposed to the true, spiritual glory of the Order, which is eternal. Religion does not suppress but rather enhances masculinity. The man of traditional loyalties, the soldier and not the courtier, the merchant or the man of land, has more judgement, sexual potency and is a better servant of the public weal (3.2.26-54). Courtliness is associated with effeminacy: 'sweet wines' were those preferred by women (and indeed by James himself as well). The play also links courtliness with lasciviousness and criticizes upper-class sexual mores.

It should be evident from the above that the play provides a background against which the moral standards of the upper class could be evaluated. The Knight of Malta does not simply take refuge in an ideal past; it is not an escapist fantasy but a castigation of the gentleman,

established and new, for losing touch with the austerity, discipline and altruism of those he was flattered to call his ancestors. The play exposes the paucity of the contemporary upper-class experience by contrasting it with a legendary picture of idealism, devotion and loyalty. It is precisely for this reason that the play employs what Howard calls 'alienation effects'.¹⁹ The play is indeed placed in an anachronistic context, as Rose argues, but not in order to devalue the action, rather it is to distinguish it as an earlier, ideal golden age. Rejecting the symptoms of what seemed to be a decline from true gentility, especially the emphasis on empty symbolisms of power, the play resorts to an idealization of the chivalric past which it links with a hierarchy of combined merit and birth.

In terms of dramatic technique, the play brings chivalry closer by encouraging us to believe that the only distance we have from the action is that of space, not time: it seems as if the heroic feats are taking place now, while in some other countries knights are neither noble, nor chaste (1.2.57-59). As an additional defence against the critical argument that The Knight of Malta presents chivalry as outdated, one could mention that 'new' is a pejorative term in the play, whereas 'old' is a term of commendation (2.3.50-55). Timelessness is celebrated; the beauty of the Order never decays and the link with the past is applauded as a positive thing (2.5.193-200). Historical relativism is one of the qualities of the play, which too often seems to glance nervously towards the audience and then resume its archaism. Oriana asks Miranda to keep himself detached from the present

and try to project their love in time: they will build a legend for future generations (5.1.93-98). There is a constant shift of focus between the temporal and the eternal, and chivalry is well-suited for this. One of the qualities of the play that is marked out for criticism is the didactic aura of the protagonists; the play has been described by Pearse as having the structure of a morality play and entirely black or white protagonists;²⁰ but the play makes no secret of its didacticism, which it flaunts. The romance mode which it adopts was inherently didactic; around 1580 Sidney commented that 'truly I have known men who even with the reading of Amadis de Gaul have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality and, especially, courage'.²¹ Miranda is 'a pattern, and a pride' to the age he lives in (3.4.64), and perhaps to Fletcher's age, too.

B. Gentility as a Spiritual Condition

The play represents gentility not only as a state of mind but also as a spiritual condition. The gentleman is not only one who possesses social privilege but also one who belongs to God's elect. This means that gentility is ineffable like grace; and it is a matter of election, not of will. True masculinity is not suppressed but enhanced through religion. Mountferrat's valour vanishes as soon as he has lost his virtue (4.1.15-19). This suggests that he has acquired secular skills but lacks the inherent virtue derived from God's grace. His inability to repent is a sign of damnation. He has some moments of regret but they last very little. The will, Wilks points out, was believed to be inherently corrupt and man could therefore not be saved without grace; the conscience remains tormented but impotent without the fortification of divine grace.²² The coincidence of the dropped cross is a sign of his fall from grace; he has fallen, as the false angels did from all their glory (4.2.218-20). 'Furious desire' is represented as external to Mountferrat, not a figment of his imagination (1.1.127-30). He acts as if he were possessed and asks his thoughts to leave him (1.1.135-36). By Act 4, Mountferrat has begun to feel the despair of the damned. 'Take hope, and comfort' (4.1.9), Abdella tells him; but he can find none. He has become a beast, loathsome to himself, and life

A burthen to me, rackd with sad remembrance

Of what I have done, and my present horrors
 Unsufferable to me, tortured with despair
 That I shall ne'r find mercy; hell about me,
 Behind me, and before me, yet I dare not,
 Still fearing worse, put off my wretched being.

(4.1.30-35)

There is very little optimism about man's ability to change his nature, which is in agreement with the conservative social vision of the play. On the other hand, it is clear that Mountferrat's evil is not solely the result of predestination but also depends on his will which consciously suppresses the dictates of his conscience (4.1). He also makes an oath to Abdella to love her or be cast to hell (1.1.170-71), one of several perjured oaths that indicate he relinquishes his claim to salvation voluntarily.

The emphasis on the soul is in harmony with the attempt of the play to find a locus where gentility can be removed from the societal paraphernalia which are seen as deceptive. The ambitious man of humble birth only seems to conform to the moral law; Mountferrat will wear the cross

If not for conscience, for hypocrisie,
 Some Churchmen so wear Cassocks.

(1.1.160-61)

Gentlemen behave in private in the same way as they do in public and are able to behave morally without coercion (as when Miranda stops himself

from recounting the failings of 'the noble *Peter*', 2.2.18). The knights of the Order have an awareness of their social position, a group consciousness which Mountferrat does not share. He is an outsider, advised to emulate, not to envy (1.1.123-26). His praise of Abdella's beauty and his offer to fight for his honour are only poor imitations of the code of conduct of his superiors. When Gomera throws down the gage, Mountferrat remarks in his aside that 'This I lookd not for' (1.3.201); the plebeian may have noble actions but never noble motives. Gentlemen in the play do possess the symbols of chivalry but not all of those who possess them are gentlemen; the difference becomes one of consciousness. Mountferrat kills infidels in the name of religion, but his valour is represented in the opening scene as an evil impulse coincidentally employed in the service of a good cause. It seems that Mountferrat uses religion as a vent for his ferocious impulses and takes pleasure in violence. For him chivalry is force and the cross thinly masks his need to exercise his prowess; the image of the Christian cross dyed in blood of infidels is ambiguous (1.1.19-20). By contrast, Miranda's sword deals out death 'wanton' and 'full of revell' (2.1.47-48). Even Norandine in 2.1 cannot resist the idea of elite violence and saves Lucinda from rape because he wishes to imagine himself as a chivalric hero rather than a Tamburlaine.

The plebeian can appropriate the externals but not the consciousness, not even the language: Mountferrat's attempts to win Oriana are a perverted version of the tactics deployed in Renaissance

courtship. Mountferrat initially gives the impression of a courtly lover but he soon reveals himself to be an uncourtly one, willing to use force where persuasion fails. Mountferrat's language falters between the language of courtly love and obscenity; from 'beames brighter then the star that ushers day' he moves on to Solyman's concubines (1.1.31-41). He alternates scorn with exaltation of Oriana, a 'trickt up toy' (1.1.96). Having appropriated the external appurtenances of chivalry, he must adopt its mode of consciousness, too; but, although the social climber will often be indistinguishable from the true gentleman, the pretence cannot be sustained for long and he will eventually be revealed. The noble sentiments of the opening twenty or so lines do not last long; Mountferrat's poetry soon becomes fraught with comical contradictions, as his attempts to reproduce the language of courtly love result in images which are sinister. A courtly lover would never compare his love to the satisfaction the great Solyman feels when he chooses a concubine for the night. Conquering Oriana is just another token of his prowess and a competitive way of fulfilling himself (1.1.94-95). His love is described in military terms: he will 'conquer' her bright eyes, whose 'guard' is innocence and take possession of her heart (1.1.11-15).

Providentialism and the doctrine of predestination are used in the play so as to legitimize social distinctions. Mountferrat is Malta's 'evill angell' (5.2.183) against whom it is acceptable to fight. His projects are 'graceless' (1.1.158), by contrast with Miranda who has 'the dew of grace'

(5.2.284). Graham Parry, in analysing the relationship between the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and Jacobean tragedy observes that part of the function of Jacobean tragedy is to reveal the true character of the soul to its possessor through action that moves to a climax of self-knowledge.²³ Mountferrat goes through a comical version of this progress to self-discovery. The Calvinistic discourse which pervades the characterization of the protagonists adumbrates the social orientation of the play. Mountferrat is an outcast in both social and religious terms and his relationship to Abdella, in fact his dependence on her, reveals his true spiritual position. The social order is verified by the religious one. This invests the upper class with a spiritual aura and makes access to its mysticism difficult. Gentility is like grace; it cannot be acquired through a mere exertion of the will.

C. Conscience and Will

Mountferrat's asides indicate the split between his public self (conscience) and his will (resolution), which are in complete harmony in the knights. Mountferrat suffers from self-division, whereas the knights have a unified consciousness. Both Mountferrat and the knights have vowed allegiance to the same code. However, the knights conform to this code for the sake of conscience, i.e. the internalization of religious and ethical dictates. By contrast, Mountferrat decides to conform to the code of conduct of the Order 'if not for conscience, for hypocrisie' (1.1.160); he has not internalized these dictates. Conscience in the play is the rational part of the soul, as opposed to will, the irrational inclinations of nature, instinct and passion. The purpose of the conscience is to control the will. Abdella represents resolution in the sense of gratification of desires at all costs ('never think of conscience:/ There is none to a man resolved', 2.3.15-16). She does not think highly of conscience, but she has 'strong resolutions' (3.2.9). Mountferrat is aware that what he feels for Abdella is 'not love, but strong Libidinous will' (1.1.219). One meaning of the word 'will' is 'carnal desire'. Those who are 'resolved' (which in the play means resolved to be evil) are also unchaste. Only unchaste women like Abdella have 'strong resolutions'. Women and plebeians have no choice but to follow their desires. Only the gentleman is granted the privilege of making moral choices and subjugating the will to the conscience. Conscience did not

only have its modern meaning of an inner moral code but also the sense of inward knowledge, consciousness (OED, 1.1); in the play those who lack conscience also lack self-knowledge, knowing their place in the scheme of things. For Cleland, conscience is a curb on ambition (IYNM, p.242) and, as a result, conducive to order. Conscience, used in this sense, does not simply mean knowing right from wrong, but following Cleland's advice to gentlemen that they should 'know yovr selves' (IYNM, p.1). Cleland does not suggest that the gentleman should acquire some kind of mystical, inward knowledge; self-knowledge consists in knowing one's place in society. Mountferrat lacks a moral conscience and a consciousness of his true nature. His blindness is a lack of self-knowledge; lust, which is 'ambitious lust' in the play (2.3.50), is blind and can only see itself (1.1.153).

The insistence on conscience and conformity indicates that the individualism of chivalry has been muted in the play and personal fulfilment can only be realized through the conduit of collective authority. It becomes less important to voice one's feelings and more vital to act in accordance with the dictates of a code which has been so internalized as to constitute a permanent audience. Fletcherian protagonists act like schizophrenics - their thoughts come to them as voices from the outside. Like Melantius in The Maid's Tragedy who has to stop and ask his honour before he can allow Evadne to defend herself, Miranda is constantly aware of his obligation to act in a certain way (2.2.18). When Miranda and Oriana

speak, they are never alone. They bring figures of authority with them: the future generations, the Order, Oriana's husband; they are constantly watched and attended (5.1). Public considerations interfere with the lovers' private feelings and there is a limited margin for individual action. Conversely, this is a play where the solemn public tone cannot be sustained for too long; it is constantly interrupted by some private crisis. The solemnity of the investiture ceremony is disrupted by the personal misdemeanours of the knights. For the public and the private to be reconciled, one has to look at one's own life from the outside, as a legend (5.1.93-98). Thomas More was in the habit of asking himself 'what would More say about this?'. In discussing Thomas More's mode of being, which included both engagement and detachment, Greenblatt observes that 'one consequence of living life as histrionic improvisation is that the category of the real merges with that of the fictive'. This means that one has 'to make a part of one's own, to live life as a character thrust into a play, constantly renewing oneself extemporaneously and forever aware of one's own unreality'.²⁴ So Rose's 'aura of anachronism' is partially a result of the insistence on suspending one's individuality, which exists in time and space, in favour of the universal theatre of history which is the essence of nobility; accordingly, physical sexuality is inappropriate for them because it is ephemeral, and it is the fictive eternity they are after, the legend (5.1.93-133). This centre of consciousness which compels a gentleman to look at himself from the outside is, as in The Nice Valour, one of the distinctive

signs of gentility and protects, as in that play, from the errors of judgement that result from subjectivism; for Mountferrat the only measure of his actions is his will. We shall examine the difficulty of judgement in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

Chastity in the play is an aristocratic, not only a personal virtue; carnal love 'every Swaine/ And sweating Groome may clasp' (5.1.125-26), but Platonic love is reserved for the few who have a responsibility to guide the future generations with their example. Far from showing the public and private spheres as irreconcilable, as Rose argues,²⁵ the play demonstrates the correspondence between a private vice like lust and a public vice like ambition. The purification of marriage from lust and the happy reunion of the couple are matched by the expulsion of Mountferrat from the Order. The body is rebellious and needs to be controlled through chastity. It is for this reason that ambition and lust are closely associated. The undercurrent of neo-Platonic discourse has social implications. Lust leads to ambition. Mountferrat's lust is dangerous because it abolishes distinction: '...lust being blind,/ Never in women did distinction find' (1.1.224-25). When Gomera states that he cannot enter the Order, he observes that no level of humanity can resist love (1.3.103-11); by levelling down distinction, Gomera renders himself unfit for the Order. The comment links him with Abdella who believes that no chains of deity or duty can hold love (1.1.210-11); but the play suggests that the gentleman does place duty over love.

The Order has one double requirement for its knights, that they are gentlemen and that they are chaste.

The insistence on chastity is a means of constructing the difference of the gentleman from the plebeian, so it is carefully protected. As Norandine remarks, gentlemen wear three bars of the cross because they are three quarters crossed in their licence, knights wear the whole because they are crossed altogether (5.1.22-32); the higher the place, the more thwarted the desire. Chastity is related to status and power. As in Bonduca, the private life becomes a metonymy for that which has to be sacrificed for the sake of public rewards. Rose is therefore wrong in observing that the play gives private life precedence.²⁶ By contrast with the eternal honour of the Order which can never be tarnished (2.5.193-99), marriage is represented as a loss of honour and status. Gomera feels he has buried all his noble achievements in a wife (3.2.171-82); or, as Mountferrat puts it, 'woman then,/ Checking or granting, is the grave of man' (1.1.146-47). Public interest is impeded by women, or, as Norandine remarks, women do not let men do their job properly (2.1.145-48). Mountferrat is advised to go and propagate, while Miranda joins the Order to pursue the higher aspirations that befit a gentleman. Gomera, who marries Oriana, is old and unfit for battle. The Order is unwilling to lose a young and brave fighter like Miranda to a woman.

D. Beauty and Morality

Scepticism on the reliability of external symbols pervades the play; this theme is explored at the levels of gentility and sexual fidelity. The opening scene introduces us to what we expect to be a straightforward play of moral certainty. Act 1, Scene 3 seems to encourage this stance. Mountferrat feels that he can be bold with his accusation because the evidence is so 'palpable' (1.3.150-51). Oddly enough, Oriana's brother declares his epistemological certitude at the same time that he establishes the deceptiveness of appearances: Oriana's beauty is like a bank of flowers with scorpions underneath (1.3.166-67). He decides quickly that 'So grosse is this, it needs no formall course,/ Prepare thy selfe, to morrow thou shalt die' (1.3.171-72). Only Gomera remains dispassionate and draws conclusions from being to seeming rather than the reverse; he considers it and decides that 'it cannot be' (1.3.188). The initial moral certainty and trust in the senses soon disappears. By 2.5, Valetta's position has dramatically shifted; now Oriana's guilt is 'partly prov'd' (14). The play underlines the difficulty in evaluating external clues to a person's consciousness and the audience participates in this. At the beginning of the play the intentions of the heroes appear to be transparent; gradually the audience is allowed only a small amount of privileged insights into the protagonists' minds. The plot itself is nothing more than a series of mistaken judgements. Only Norandine can see Oriana's innocence, as

white as her dress (2.5.69). His role in the play indicates that the sense of moral finality that Valetta encourages is impossible to sustain and that life should not be reduced to Valetta's neat equations. Since the senses deceive, reason is not sufficient guidance to reality; Norandine bestows mercy twice, once on Lucinda and once on Mountferrat at the end of the play. Through Norandine, the play introduces realism and humanity into what would otherwise be a play of uncomplicated didacticism. He serves as a gauge for evaluating the excesses in the other characters; with his contagious good will, he helps us keep a sense of perspective and brings down to earth the morality play style of the characters. He is the man who never brings bad luck, and whose wounds heal miraculously.

The night scene (3.1) is the comical, lowly version of the difficulties with judgement that have been pestering the Order. In the dark, the corporal's imagination makes him mistake Norandine for a bear, a pig and, finally, the devil. The corporal gets exasperated and so confused that he wonders 'What, have I lost my selfe? what are ye?' (67). The theme of the scene is whether the senses can be relied on to formulate judgements on reality and in the main plot this extends to gentility and Oriana's inwardness. The scene also ties in with the connection that the play establishes between self-knowledge and knowledge of the other; not knowing the other is tantamount to a loss of personal identity in the night scene, just as in the main plot identity is reflected in the eyes of the other, of women. The limitations of human eyesight at night are related to the lack

of an objective and reliable moral vision, unencumbered by passions and personal prejudices. The men that attempt to control Oriana (her brother, her husband and Miranda) do not have the clear moral insight that would grant them access to Oriana's mind. In 4.2 Gomera remarks that his soul and senses were clouded when the night of jealousy surrounded his judgement (173-77). The men seem to project their own moral inadequacies on women, as Abdella reminds Mountferrat; what they see in them is really themselves. Mountferrat compares Abdella to the devil and attributes his unhappiness to her (2.3.17-18). He describes Abdella as hell's image (4.1.63-64) and blames his damnation on her. Abdella, on the other hand, complains that if anything crosses him, she is the devil (4.2.155-57). In fact, the woman simply reflects the nature of the man's soul. This assumes that women are a void to be filled by men: a woman must always reflect a man's mood, she is vacant like a mirror (1.2.19-32). As a result, women are seen as objects rather than subjects. They are treated as war spoil, they can be bought with money or jewels. Norandine makes a gift of Lucinda for his soldiers. Mountferrat tries to persuade Oriana with his spoil and pearls, and if he wins, his labours will be rewarded 'with ten fold prize' (1.1.53). Lucinda is a captive, 'one part of the prize' brought in by Norandine; she would have been 'a welcome present' for Oriana (3.2.74-77). Indeed, women seem to take many different shapes, in accordance with the tastes of the male imagination: they are presents,

toys, graves of men, mirrors, banks of flowers, monsters, devils, war spoil, hags, embodiments of hell.

In a world where both actions and symbols are questionable, the search for the other person's inwardness becomes compulsive; the men are in an obsessive search for 'proofe/ Of any unchast purpose' (3.3.41-42) in women. On the other hand, it is also clear that the physical world is the only clue to the intangible reality. It might seem strange that while Valetta declares his mistrust of appearances, he decides to test Oriana's honesty through a physical trial; but Mann notes that although the judicial combat might seem to us like the triumph of physical force, it was in fact an appeal to the supernatural in which what triumphed was not brute force but truth; she explains this on the grounds that 'the exposure of the body to hazard is the medium through which non-physical realities are revealed';²⁷ the body becomes 'a repository of truths'.²⁸ The spirit can never be quite separated from the physical reality, and judging inner feeling from outward appearance is not illegitimate. The reverse is also true; seeming affects being. Miranda has to wear the robes to become pious before entering the Order and there is a 'holy mystery' in the names of husband and wife which cools Miranda's flames (5.1.115-17). The close connection between body and spirit is suggested by the central position of rituals in the action, which only Abdella regards as 'superstitious ceremonies' (4.4.33). Collonna labours the conversion of Lucinda 'pittyng such a beauteous case should hide/ A soule prophan'd with infidelity' (5.2.170-71). The association of

beauty and virtue in the play is used to emphasize the idea of natural gentility. Differences in morals always translate into aesthetic ones; Norandine's most noticeable difference from the knights is his style rather than his lack of chastity. Appropriateness is as important as morality. Oriana's description of Miranda as the perfect gentleman would suit perfectly Castiglione's courtier: external beauty which reflects inner nobility, a pleasing carriage and amicable character; stern power is tempered with sweetness and charm (3.2.103-115).

Externals can therefore be reliable, and Abdella's blackness is an indication of her moral deformity, but this does not mean that there is always an exact correspondence between appearance and reality. More importantly, as scene 3.1 suggests, the search for truth is always complicated by the perceiving subject. The perceiving subject must be free from passions because 'lust neither sees nor heares ought but it selfe' (1.1.153). The link between the physical and the spiritual means that the duel for Oriana's life is presented as a judicious combat in which the outcome is ruled by Providence. Nevertheless, Miranda chooses to fight rather than leave the outcome to Providence. God always finds out the truth, Norandine observes (2.5.20), although it is made clear that if Miranda had not intervened, Gomera's ageing hand would have proved a weak agent of divine justice. Truth triumphs, but only through several indirect and perilous footpaths. The protagonists like to believe that the success of their complicated schemes, which include disguise, is due to the

intervention of Providence. It is ironical that Oriana encourages Gomera to fight for her by telling him 'ye fight for her as spotlesse of mischiefes,/ As heaven is of our sinnes, or truth of errors' (2.5.89-90). The providential search for truth is soon afterwards turned into makeshift theatre.

The ideal of chastity in the play comprises neo-Platonic, chivalric and Christian influences. The union of souls has its origins in Plato; the concept of chaste love as a source of inspiration comes from chivalry; the idea of chastity within marriage comes from the Reformation. Courtly love is not the main emphasis of chivalry in the play; religion takes precedence, but this does not mean that the two are antagonistic. The contemplation of physical beauty becomes the first stage of an initiation into spiritual elevation. The beautiful Oriana associates herself with truth; and Miranda loves her 'as all fair minds do goodnesse' (2.2.3). The play uses the neo-Platonic link between the body and the soul: Oriana remarks on Miranda that 'heaven did well, in such a lovely feature/ To place so chaste a mind' (3.2.108-109). The soul influences external appearance.²⁹ Outward beauty is a true sign of inner goodness because the cause of physical beauty is the beauty of the soul. Ugliness is associated with lasciviousness. Sensual desire is the inferior version of true love, its point of departure. Beauty inspires goodness and seems to have the same effect on the beholder as heavenly grace; even Norandine is affected by beauty in a spiritual way, although he is not prepared to acknowledge it. He feels it penetrate his soul: 'you go too deep still' (2.1.137). 'Pox upon those goggles' (2.1.144)

suggests that Lucinda's beauty has affected him through the eyes and this is therefore a different kind of attraction than the 'one nights gingling' he has been accustomed to so far. In noble love, beauty cannot be enjoyed through the sense of touch but only through sight, which is the noblest of the senses, as it is the least involved in material things. Only the gentleman can discern the non-physical reality. The fact that Mountferrat does not need to look at his sexual partner is an indication that his attraction is of the inferior kind. Noble love is admiration for beauty enjoyed through sight, not through the sense of touch. In 5.2 Gomera refuses to have the veiled woman as his new bride, although he is reassured that she is as beautiful as Oriana; only lust is depersonalized. True love depends on the eyes/contemplation of beauty. Abdella is 'full of pleasure in the touch' (1.1.181), but love is pleasure of the eyes. Only lust demands 'still night' (1.1.195). Lust abolishes distinction; Platonic love is associated with gentility because it relies on distinction.

In conclusion, The Knight of Malta is a response to the contemporary devaluation of honour. Because the period had obscured distinctions by setting too low a price on honour and by locating it in externals, the play places a very high price on it by making war the site of true honour and emphasizing inwardness. As in Bonduca, older models of gentle self-dramatization are evoked because the values with which they are associated are seen as topical.

In its anxiety about the risks of subjectivism and the appropriate interpretation of external clues to a person's inwardness the play resembles The Nice Valour, The Noble Gentleman, The Wild-Goose Chase and The Little French Lawyer, which also explore the difficulties of judgement and truth at the levels of both gentility and sexual fidelity.

CHAPTER THREE

The Humorous Lieutenant (c.1619): Kings and Ushers

A. The Audience of Gentility

The play has received very little critical attention and is usually treated as a study of sexual politics; for McMullan 'the quest for women's sovereignty... broaches fundamental questions about the nature of rule', and the play is a study in 'the bounds of proper kingship'.¹ Similarly, Oxley, in the introduction to his edition of the play, analyses it in terms of its parallels between the martial and the romantic actions, with the lieutenant representing earthly common sense.² Blau has compared Leucippe to the CIA and Mrs Peachum in Brecht;³ Leech has recognized 'the repellent touch of actuality which has from time to time been achieved in twentieth-century theatre and film'⁴ but they do not go any further in explaining how the naturalistic quality of the play is realized. The Humorous Lieutenant is a play with rich social embroidering and one of its significant aspects is the insight into how audiences can be wooed and overwhelmed. The contemporary feel of the play perhaps comes from its presentation of the artificial ways on which authority relies to manipulate the consciousness of inferiors.

One of the most prominent aspects of gentility was, as Leinwand puts it, 'that of being on view, of visibility and spectacle'.⁵ Thomas Gainsford in The Rich Cabinet (1616) writes of the gentleman who may be, unless saved by a rich widow, rotting in a ditch, 'not unseene and unknowne'.⁶ Whatever he does, the courtier, according to Castiglione, should consider the place where he does it and in whose presence; and in war, 'when the courtier finds himself involved in a skirmish or pitched battle, or something of that nature, he should arrange to withdraw discreetly from the main body and accomplish the bold and notable exploits he has to perform in as small a company as possible and in view of all the noblest and most eminent men of the army, and above all, in the presence, or if possible, under the very eyes, of the prince he is serving'.⁷ Honour is, as Cleland defines it, 'in the hearts and opinion of other men' (IYNM, p.179). Every action must be a carrier of the gentleman's status. Greenblatt even compares manuals of court behaviour to handbooks for actors, guides to 'a society whose members were nearly always on stage'.⁸ The gentleman, Cleland observes, should never forget that he is a gentleman; his gentlemanly mind must show itself in all his actions. Ideally, this is not affectation but a transparency that allows others to judge by small things the greater that lie behind (IYNM, p.170); the body expresses the secret thoughts of the mind and represents the man, Brathwait agrees (EG, p.5). Before the advent of telecommunications, the physical presence was inevitably the medium of authority, and the cult of extravagance, 'depraved

effeminacie' and 'fashion' celebrated exactly that; the gentleman had a duty to embody the qualities required of his office.

Court life enhanced the emphasis on display. Such an arena, Whigham points out, requires 'continual performance before and judgement by one's peers and superiors. Such subjection to criticism was a constitutive element of the courtly atmosphere. ... All utterance in this context comes to have primarily epideictic force: if the manifestation of style transcends issues of substance; if subjects of conversation increasingly become querelles: if conversation is not listened to but watched; then the power relation between speaker and hearer becomes skewed toward the audience'.⁹ Status in the play is experienced through its impact on public life, which is a theatre of dramatic entrances and exits where a display must be made, of virtue or virtu. We are encouraged not only to listen to the political speeches that are made but also to watch the action and the metadramatic ways in which participants register their superiority. Celia does not listen to Demetrius but only watches him: she responds to the visual cues he provides. She quickly becomes intoxicated; to her and the gentlemen who risk their lives in his wars he is a god, a charismatic leader with an irresistible, irrational appeal. Her comments on Demetrius respond to his majestic style rather than to the content of what he says. There is a 'noble fierceness' in his eyes (1.1.159) and he has a 'brave confidence': every single one of his movements is loaded with meaning. She responds in a sexual way to what is a political speech

(1.1.199-200). Visual lust is one of the court's sins, and observing others goes on all the time (1.1.10-25, 1.1.104-105, 1.1.320-22, 2.1.1, 2.3.100-102, 3.1.22-24, 3.2.5-7). No wonder that Usher 2 tries to talk Celia into having sex with him by promising to show her 'the pictures, and the hangings,/ The lodgings, gardens, and the walkes' (1.1.93-95).

The opening scene establishes an atmosphere of extravagance and artificiality; the ushers are perfuming the place round, the richest cushions are taken out, the ladies have taken great pains to bring out the best in their looks. Entrances are announced and are always impressive, the stage is populated with plebeians trying to catch a glimpse of the spectacle. The atmosphere is that of a decadent, exhibitionist society delighting in acting and watching, with a taste for pageantry and elaborate ceremony, and there is a constant chorus to the action. The role of the audience is as important as that of the protagonists. The usher remarks that the guests are necessary for reporting the beauty and wisdom of the ambassadors (1.1.18-25). Celia wonders why eyes are set on the ambassadors and crowds throng around them, affording them the status of figures worthy of wonder (1.1.104-105): status is externally conferred by the audience. The scene sets the tone for the magnification of the self which is central to both courtly ceremony and war. The prince's attitude to war is related to the society of the court, with its emphasis on pomp and display. For him, greatness cannot exist in isolation: others must feel its effects, the 'roialties' (1.1.185) and 'emperiall dignities,/ And powerfull god-like actions,

fit for Princes' (1.1.187-88). All actions are examined in the light of their public effects, which often overshadow their intrinsic value; and, naturally, honour in the play has the sense of public esteem.

The phenomenological view of power results in an aesthetic attitude to violence; war is the appropriate garment for majesty. Power that does not inspire awe and fear is not power. Cruelty is made to appear heroic rather than obnoxious. Those who are not violent are 'poore petty men' (1.1.191). The prince believes that histrionic political moves are essential for greatness. As for the ambassadors' masters,

You call 'em Kings, they never wore those royalties,
Nor in the progresse of their lives arriv'd yet
At any thought of King: emperiall dignities,
And powerfull god-like actions, fit for Princes,
They can no more put on, and make 'em sit right,
Then I can with this mortall hand hold heaven.

(1.1.185-90)

Power and violence are related in the play, in fact all excess is associated with greatness. The prince believes that the king's natural superiority justifies the violence (1.1.191-98). Antigonus calls the ambassadors 'men of poore and common apprehensions' (1.1.168); what is unacceptable by vulgar standards is justifiable for majesty. Hazlitt, in analysing the appeal of the insolence of power over the plea of necessity, argues that the assumption of a right to insult or oppress others carries 'an imposing air of

superiority with it' because 'we had rather be the oppressor than the oppressed. The love of power in ourselves and the admiration of it in others are both natural to man: the one makes him a tyrant, the other a slave. Wrong dressed out in pride, pomp and circumstance has more attraction than abstract right'.¹⁰ This explains Celia's sexual response to the prince's political speech, which I mentioned earlier. It also explains why this is a prince whom the people acclaim in public, 'fit to rule'; he is expected to be aggressive by 'all these attending/ When he shall make their fortunes' (1.1.175-76). The prince does not lack followers (1.1.173, 1.1.300-301). Hazlitt adds that the power of the great is 'at the expense of our weakness; their riches of our poverty; their pride of our degradation; their splendour of our wretchedness; their tyranny of our servitude'.¹¹ The ambassadors emphasize the injuries their provinces have received; but to the king these 'bloudy roades' (1.1.116), 'those Citties sack'd, those Prisoners, and that Prey' (1.1.125) are exactly the proof of his achievement, the powerful god-like actions appropriate for princes. Majesty can only exist in the encroachment on others' rights and power.

B. Courtesy and Prowess

The emphasis on display and aggrandizement of the self means that quite often this aspect of social life overshadows true politics. The formal proceedings are constantly interrupted by Demetrius' asides to himself or to Celia. According to Ulrici, placing comic scenes by the side of the historical action has the effect of 'holding up the concave mirror of irony to that mere semblance of history which is so frequently mistaken for history itself; all that appears to be history, the parade of mantles and sceptres, haggles about kingdoms and high-sounding speeches are in truth a mere show, the mere mark of history'.¹² The play creates this effect not only by intermingling political action with scenes of the private life but also by misapplying heroic imagery. Horsemanship is an emblem of chivalric prowess; but equestrian imagery also abounds in the sexual innuendoes of the play. The emblems of chivalry are associated with lechery and disease; the lieutenant has an honourable disease, 'pox of thirty Coates' (1.1.359) and also suffers from the scratches (1.1.363), a disease affecting the pasterns of horses (OED, I.2.a). The lieutenant is associated with horses (3.7.25-26); but so is the king (4.1.71). The king has not 'made any salley' (2.1.10) on Celia, and the word that is used also applies to a horse leaping a mare (OED, V.1.2). The association of the symbols of chivalry with lechery is appropriate because inferior needs lie behind the high-blown

claims and private desires become entangled in public offices or causes. This connects the lieutenant with the prince and the king with the ushers.

The emphasis on style over substance is seen not only at court but also on the battlefield. War for Demetrius has symbolic value; he is less interested in conquests themselves than in the awe he will inspire in others. All he wants from war is honour, not blood (1.1.310); and he associates war with duelling (1.1.245-46). The purpose of the war is not domination but display; the appearance of power becomes power itself. Similarly, courtesy also consists in forms, as it is used solely for the purpose of concealing the arrogance of authority. Knight points out that the ideal ethics of chivalry and generally fin behaviour act for the nobility as a false consciousness to conceal from themselves the aggressive and often brutal character of their dominance; in other words, courteoisie is simply 'a pleasing mystification' of the personal proesce.¹³ At war, the beautiful externals of chivalry can disguise a violent individualism; just as at court the emphasis on stylistic purposes is used to disguise the unrestrained assertion of the king's will. Perfume is used in the opening scene just before the impressive parade of the king's power begins, but also when Celia comes to the court in order to be seduced by the king (4.5.15, 22). The king behaves in accordance with the chivalric rules of courtly love, and Celia observes that she is 'a Queene, a Goddesse, I know not what-/ And no constellation in all heaven, but I outshine it' (4.1.41-42); but courtesy is meaningless in a will that knows no restrictions (1.1.202, 4.5.59-60).

The Humorous Lieutenant reflects the shift from the chivalric gentility of the sixteenth century, with its overtones of individualism, to the more inclusive ideal of the seventeenth century with its insistence on inward virtue. Now the enemies that need to be subdued extend to include not only external ones but one's will as well. Gentlemen with a princely disposition, according to Brathwait, 'esteeme it the most glorious conquest to be subduers of their owne wills, preferring the saving of a *life* before the gaining of an *Empire*' (EG, p.96). Demetrius ominously states at the beginning of the play that a king's will should have no restraint (1.1.255-77), a view he has inherited from his father (4.5.58-59); and he expects to subdue fortune to his will. During the war he learns that 'that man's unfit to governe,/ That cannot guide himselfe' (2.2.10-11), and that Fortune has hours of loss even for the most valiant (2.2.55-56). Both king and prince learn to subdue their wills. The purpose of the war is to train the prince to command. Leontius states that the prince showed himself 'a noble gentleman,/ Every way apt to rule' (2.4.19-20). Eventually, however, he ties the enemy's faith forever through courtesy (4.2.17-18). A ruler must prove himself to be a gentleman first; the king who is 'apt to rule' is the one who has proved himself to be 'a noble gentleman'. At the end of the play Demetrius has passed from knight to courtly gentleman and has tempered the assertion of his will with courtesy, which will make him a better ruler than his father; courtesy consists in refraining from asserting one's will, even if one has the power to do so.

Similarly, the king also learns that even a superior will needs restraint. When King Antigonus approaches Celia as the king's servant, he tells her that he has fulfilled the king's will (4.1.96-97). In 4.5 the king states that he has it in his will to force Celia do what he wants (59-60). The blind assertion of the will equates the prince with the lieutenant and the king with the usher. Both king and usher use their office to force sexual favours from Celia. Celia teaches the king to secure the obedience of his subjects through love, not fear. After he has been reformed he ties Celia's 'obedient service' and seems to her to be a god (4.5.87-93). The play thus comes full-circle; the king's god-like nature is now asserted not through the 'powerfull god-like actions' (1.1.188) of the opening scene but through 'god-like Justice' (4.5.54). From now on, the subjects' loyalty will be based on love rather than fear and material reward. The cult of aggressive power (will) is changed into a worship of authority (will tempered by justice and courtesy) in both king and prince.

The idea that the man should conform to the office rather than the reverse and that the external accoutrements of status look ugly on those who lack the right consciousness for their position is first established in the opening scene. Celia tells the usher that although his place bears the name of gentleman, he lacks gentility; the fair clothes of his office look inappropriate on him (1.1.72-81). Differences of clothes and style aside, the moral characteristics of people at different social levels disturbingly overlap. Instead of focusing on the outward marks of status, it is more

important to have an awareness of one's status which makes one act in accordance with one's predetermined role. When Leontius prevents him from leaving the war in order to get married, the lieutenant wonders that 'a Gentleman and an officer cannot have the libertie/ To doe the office of a man' (2.4.178-79); like the king he lacks an awareness of his duty. When pushed by Celia to a realization of his position, the king is reformed. Celia reminds him that for a king to be honourable, he should not possess external glory, the trappings of his 'office'; he should also be as his office is: 'a god-like Justice,/ Into all shedding equally your vertues' (4.5.54-55). A sense of superiority should not consist just in privilege but also in duty. Celia brings him into an awareness of his status, places an audience before him: God (4.5.68-76). She gains entrance by applying a comic version of the same tactics to the usher. Although his place bears the name of gentleman, he does not behave like one (1.1.76-81); one should live up to one's position.

Without this awareness, order is lost and the hierarchy of the court becomes a hierarchy of vice and lust similar to that of Leucippe's mobile brothel. This explains the association between the language of office/hierarchy and that of lust (2.3.41, 2.4.178-79, 3.4.39-40, 4.1.105). The king is 'full of businesse' (3.2.103); but Leucippe is also 'full of businesse' (2.3.59). The discrepancy between the rhetorical construction of kings in the opening scene and the reality of the king suggests that the king is not different from the usher who tries to persuade Celia to sleep

with him. This reveals the emptiness of office and the arbitrary nature of distinctions in the absence of inwardness. This is further underlined by the fact that in The Humorous Lieutenant disguise seems to be sufficient for a change of identity; status is very mobile. The king does not hesitate to disguise himself as the king's servant; in this way he adopts the attire of a servant, after he has shown himself to possess the same mind. Without her usual clothes, Celia is mistaken for a low-class strumpet in the opening scene. All it takes to transform a countryman into courtly gentleman is a bought office and airs; differences between social classes are only superficial (1.1.67-68). As presented in the play, the king's prerogative is part of a hierarchy of prerogative that ensures order; the king's abuse of his prerogative is extended to his court and beyond it. The usher's behaviour to Celia is a reflection of the king's abuse of his office. Without difference in inwardness, the difference between king and usher becomes one of style, not substance.

The play is not post-heroic but heroism can be displayed in other ways. Courtliness is treated not as a quality that adds grace and refinement to noble manners but also as a politically relevant quality. Celia seems to understand the relevance of courtliness to the exercising of influence better than the prince does. She is aware that at court wit and diplomacy are perfectly valid tactics of exerting influence without resort to violence. She is heroic in her own way and her description of herself as a 'she-souldier' (4.1.36) draws a parallel between Demetrius' military method

of exercising power and her tactics. In the court environment of the play, with sorcery, prostitution and betrayal thriving, flexibility and wit are more important than swords. Jaeger states that in its origin courtliness has a social and political function in court life; 'the division into ingratiating, bright-spirited mask, and inner, unique man is simply an obvious necessity and a sensible form of self-preservation in a social and political context where the will of the prince has the force of law'.¹⁴ Celia has to resort to what Greenblatt calls 'the transformation of disruptive criticism into histrionic celebration' to save her honour (4.5.39-55).¹⁵ She represents a different path to political domination. Rather than surrender her will to corrupt authority as the lieutenant, the courtiers, and the prostitutes do, she resorts to dissimulation in order to save her honour - in an environment where disobedience is impossible. The self-division between mask and person which the court encourages can be seen, in sinister versions, in the humorous lieutenant, who displays the forms of valour but not the inwardness, and the prostitutes, who display the forms of passion without real feeling. In these two cases the division of the self is associated with a lack of integrity.

Perhaps these have made Demetrius suspect dissimulation so much. By contrast with Celia, Demetrius seems to believe that all dissimulation is immoral, and in 4.8 he eagerly grabs at what he believes to be the proof of Celia's corruption. In discussing Tyndale's attitude to courtly pretences, Greenblatt observes that 'the righteous individual has no

scope for feigning, indirection, or hidden judgement; he seizes directly, as it were rapaciously, upon the truth. Any more devious path bears witness to bad faith and backsliding, or, at best, to an unwilling, enforced concession to the overwhelming pressures of a corrupt social world. To take delight in social performance as distinct from inward reality is unthinkable'.¹⁶ Yet, although Demetrius does not see it, what Celia does is simply employ the same tactics that the court uses. Celia indulges in her skill with as much relish as Demetrius surrenders to histrionics. She remarks that she realizes she is fooled, but wishes to 'make my self some sport, though I pay deare for't' (3.4.77). When Demetrius is jealous, Celia admits that 'I must now play the knave with him, to dye for't,/ 'Tis in my nature' (4.8.55-56). She readily admits that she is actively looking for greater challenges to pit her wits against and is fascinated by her own performances. In the end, Demetrius resorts to a well-staged show to win her back ('the more humble you are, the more she'l take compassion', 5.3.29) and completes his education for a leader with diplomatic skills.

C. 'These noble tricks'

In a society which values externals so highly, it is to be expected that honour, 'the spur of all illustrious natures', will have the sense of reputation. In his search for honour, the prince is motivated by passion, he is 'bravely desperate' (2.2.31) and 'without discretion' (2.2.37). This lack of reason and insight he shares with the lieutenant, who dives into danger without awareness of what he is doing, although he fights bravely. Honour as reputation overemphasizes the symptoms of courage; but what matters is the consciousness, the state of mind in which heroic feats are accomplished. In her discussion of valour in Jonson's The New Inn, N. Cordner remarks that 'to be over-concerned about reputation is to set others' opinions above one's own self-knowledge, judgement and responsibility'; reason is needed to 'weigh up the potential injury or threat and decide on the correct response'.¹⁷ True valour 'examines and assesses its object'.¹⁸ Sensual love is like indiscriminate valour, as both do not examine their object; after drinking the love potion that was intended for Celia, the lieutenant falls in love with the king; and his fighting has been equally lacking in awareness. The love potion reduces love to a set of symptoms, just as Leucippe prostitutes the mere forms of passion. She ensures that her girls have the right clothes for the job and even that their names are suitable for firing the male imagination. However, in both sexuality and war, what gives meaning to action is awareness. Unless the

doer has consciously decided to do what he does, all actions, even heroic ones, are meaningless; without awareness, life is reduced to Leucippe's deadening rationality. The king and prince do not really believe in courtly love and chivalry but use their conventions purely as a matter of form. Their real motives are pride and lust. Both are against awareness.

Demetrius wants to turn war into a ritual, a game with rules. He believes that the effects of his previous dishonour can be offset simply by vindicating his honour anew in battle and requiting the offence. Impressed by the virgin valour and true fire that Demetrius has shown in battle, the enemy decides that these deserve even from an enemy 'this courtesie;/ Your lives and Armes freely I give 'em' (2.4.94-95). The lieutenant, however, complains that he never dared trust 'these noble tricks' (2.4.99); if it had been him he would not have been spared. For gentlemen fighting is a contest of noble wills for excellence at courtesy. Demetrius resents that the enemy has beaten him at courtesy: 'At mine owne weapon, Courtesie, h'as beaten me,/ At that I was held a Master in, he has cow'd me' (2.4.126-27). He repays the favour in the magnanimous man's way: double. The magnanimous man is 'disposed to confer benefits, but is ashamed to accept them, because the one is the act of a superior and the other that of an inferior. When he repays a service he does so with interest, because in this way the original benefactor will become his debtor and beneficiary'.¹⁹ Demetrius wishes to reciprocate the courtesy of his enemy so as to regain his superiority. The magnanimous man speaks and acts straightforwardly

because his superior attitude makes him outspoken and candid: this is why 'all flatterers are of the lowest class, and humble people are flatterers'.²⁰ Only the ushers try to ingratiate themselves with Celia after they have seen that she has the prince's favour. The king only speaks two lines (1.1.107-108) to the ambassadors that have come to plead with him for the cessation of hostilities; he does not need to woo his audience. Demetrius treats war as the king treats the court, an opportunity for displaying one's control over one's audience.

War provides Demetrius with 'game enough' and is 'sport' with intricate rules in which no one is hurt, just common soldiers. He does not seem to be concerned about the cost of his enterprise in terms of human lives; the lieutenant is aware that the prince would never weep for him (2.4.62-63). When Demetrius goes out to war for the second time, the honour of his country has been completely eclipsed: his sole purpose is to vindicate his honour. No strategic considerations enter into his decision. For the enemies of Demetrius, honour is fighting for the public weal, and even Demetrius recognizes and rewards their moral superiority (3.7). The attitude of the prince at the beginning of the play is reminiscent of that of the Earl of Essex for whom even an ordinary ambushade was not undertaken primarily as a tactical move with some military advantage in view, but as a chivalric exploit that might secure honour for him; he seemed to imagine that 'war, like tilting or duelling, was essentially a sport in which the contestants won or lost honour, depending on their skill and courage'.²¹

Demetrius, too, thinks of the war as a duel; he tells the ambassadors that their masters shall not 'coole i'th' field in expectation of us' (1.1.246); war is a contest of 'abilities of mind and courage' (1.1.248).

Demetrius never seems to become aware of the discrepancy between chivalric idealism and the practice of war. The burden falls on the lieutenant's shoulders to remind us that the war takes place at two different levels; that of gentlemen and that of common soldiers. Leontius is always there to cushion things for Demetrius. His fighting has been very protected; Leontius has been counteracting all weapons that could put Demetrius' life at risk (2.2.21-27). The soldiers may be cannon fodder but a prince's death cannot be a subject for 'a whining tale' (2.2.42). The protection of the prince from the war's ugly realities goes so far that Leontius sends a messenger to advise the king to be prepared to comfort him because he is full of sadness (2.2.103-106). Antigonus even orders that no one should mourn for a lost friend in case the prince's feelings get hurt. In 2.2 Leontius explains that war for the prince and himself is a matter of honour; they do not fear death but dying forgotten, in a multitude (2.2.49-50). A few lines later, the lieutenant enters and juxtaposes his own view of war, which revolves around a different set of distinctions, life and death, not honour and shame; those who fight meet death in the same way, irrespective of their social class (2.2.74-84). Dominance and submission, Helms has pointed out, can be the sources of glory and shame, but also the terms of destruction and survival.²² The lieutenant reminds us that the absolute

distinctions of Demetrius cannot be sustained in war: the 'pilgarlike' is killed, but the lord who cries 'make room villaines/ I am a Lord' is also killed by a rascal (2.2.79-84). For the lieutenant fighting is a matter of life or death, not honour and dishonour. Although far from being the moral commentator of the play, he underlines the hollowness in the quest for glory of the prince; if honour is merely reputation, then it is foolish to kill one another for honour, as the lieutenant believes (3.3.23-25). If one sees the war as the lieutenant sees it, mere scuffling (3.3.24), then this is what it will be. The lieutenant subplot exposes in all heroic action a core of juvenile bad temper, a 'humour'. Heroic excess is not the same as petty squabbling, but without awareness the difference becomes one of scale and style, not substance.

D. True Subjects and Peevish Maids

Prostitution and political power seem to have the same aim of turning people into products and classifying them in accordance with their obedience; women who do not wish to prostitute themselves are seen as 'peevish'. Both deny inferiors an independent centre of consciousness. This is a depersonalized and dehumanized world, so abstract and automatic that it seems as if the court has kept the outward forms, the offices and the clothes and lost the soul within. Privacy is non-existent; there is constant enquiring about and observing others (1.1.10-25, 1.1.104-105, 1.1.320-22, 2.1.1, 2.3.100-102, 3.1.22-23, 3.2.5-7), the favourite activity of both the king and Leucippe, who even has an agent. Watching is part of the attempt of authority to control consciousness. Menippus is surprised to find that Leucippe has a full record of Celia's background. She scornfully tells him:

Poore weake man,
I have a thousand eyes, when thou art sleeping,
Abroad, and full of businesse.

(2.3.100-102)

In Leucippe's social meltpot, the responses of people seem to be only too predictable; loud protesting is easily recognizable as a sign of an 'easie nature'. Merchants' wives, country women, widows, impoverished aristocrats, all lack the ability to think independently. Tymon complains that

his wife refuses to act as a bawd, which would secure his preferment. He wonders why she is worried about the burden on her conscience, since women have no hesitation in making their husbands cuckolds (2.1.52-55); but manipulating others' consciousness is quite different from taking responsibility for one's own morality. Each class denies its inferiors the ability to think in a creative manner and have an independent will. To the king, obedience means the surrender of one's will. Spontaneity has no place in this culture which has a mechanistic attitude to life; the courtiers can only interpret Celia's wit, the expression of her individuality, as lasciviousness. Power tends to divide people into black and white categories and look at the world in terms of binary oppositions; the ushers assume that since Celia is not a courtier, she is a strumpet.

The abolition of will/individuality makes control easier. There is a struggle between the individual consciousness and the court. 'Obedient' (4.8.52) is used in a negative sense by Demetrius; Celia's wit suggests her refusal to submit her intellectual independence to authority. The king and the prince represent two mutually exclusive modes of exercising power. The king's, which capitalizes on the suppression of individuality, magic and instinct; and the prince's, which revolves around reason, courtesy and wit. His adolescent ideals are eventually transformed into a more mature way of exercising power. In the beginning, the prince appeals to the superstitious belief that kings are like gods, irrationality and passion in order to legitimize his power; no wonder that his soldiers carelessly rush

into battle and have a narrow escape from death. War stresses uniformity and conformity. The love potion is the ultimate attempt of arrogant authority to control the consciousness of its inferiors, or those it regards as inferiors. While in war the abolition of individual consciousness (as in the humorous lieutenant) secures achievement, this can be disastrous in social living.

Re-labelling is pervasive in the world of the play. Both the court and Leucippe deal with moral issues in language that is formal and abstract. Such language obscures distinctions and turns substantial differences into differences of style. Tymon's language provides a neutral description for what is the office of bawdry; bawdry is referred to as service (2.1.17-23) and Tymon is 'a true Subject', ever careful 'that nothing you receiv'd from me, to sport ye,/ But should endure all tests, and all translations' (2.1.20-22). The abolition of consciousness turns people into products. 'What do you pitch her at?' Leucippe asks her maid, trying to assess Phoebe's value in the prostitution market (2.3.70). She even gives a free gift to the mother and has a register book of the business. Next month she will see 'deliver'd' twenty able maids; now they are 'out of beautie'; all they have is 'blown stuff'. The systematizing of prostitution and its reduction to official language sanitizes it and blunts our moral sense. Richard Steele wishes that Fletcher had tried to make Leucippe's baseness more odious;²³ but Leucippe's language is odious precisely because it neutralizes moral issues so much. The bureaucratic attitude seems to be the suitable

expression for a society that relies so heavily on forms and the abolition of the personality.

In conclusion, The Humorous Lieutenant draws attention to the theatrical roots of politics and status in the exhibitionist environment of the court. Status should not rely on externals or power but authority which inspires respect and provides an example; it is not externally conferred by the audience but consists in an awareness of the duties one's position involves. An emphasis on the appearance of people, ideals and objects overshadows their intrinsic value. In the absence of intrinsic difference, the difference between the ushers and the king becomes one of style, not of substance. Those who are truly noble do not seek to exercise their will in an absolute way and abolish the will of others.

As in The Nice Valour and The Noble Gentleman, the division of the self into mask and inwardness (or even the elimination of inwardness and the prevalence of the mask) is one of the risks of court life and is incompatible with the integrity of the unified self. Prostitution is the by-product of a court where all wills are subjugated to that of the king, where there is no inwardness and passion, like valour, is reduced to the mechanical reproduction of its forms only. In The Nice Valour and The Noble Gentleman the emptying of the self and its reduction to forms is reflected in practices of the private life, courtship and impersonal sexual love respectively. The court poses a threat to inwardness and innate superiority because of its emphasis on forms and theatricality.

We have already encountered a study of the relationship between valour and courtesy in Bonduca. The difficulty is not only that valour can be impeded by courtesy. As in Bonduca, there is a contrast between individualistic honour and honour that is imbued with public spirit; the insistence on courtesy can be a sign of pride, a need to dramatize one's superiority. Unlike Bonduca, where the chivalric ideals of Caratach are very sceptically treated, in the world of tragicomedy the faith in courtesy is rewarded and the prince's pals are saved from death as a courtesy from the enemy in recognition of the prince's valour. The limits between upper-class and lower-class figures may often become blurred but chivalric idealism is not invalidated by the realities of policy and warfare. The tragic potential in trying to fit chivalry and courtesy into war is muted in this play. Both plays, however, suggest that the distinctions which Penys and Caratach in Bonduca and Demetrius in The Humorous Lieutenant try to preserve cannot be sustained in war; the code of courtesy and honour is for the few but death is for everyone.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Nice Valour (1615-16)¹: Gentility and Political Authority

A. Self-Representation and Reputation

The Nice Valour is an attempt to chart the conflict between the gentleman's assertion of his status as this is prescribed by the code of honour and the claims of political authority to control over social distinctions. In the world represented in the play the latter results in the loss of authority and hierarchy at all social levels. What is considered is not just the relationship between gentility and authority but also the interaction between the gentleman's inward self and the social relations that surround it. This is related to the question whether there is a reality beyond the fictions that the mind creates and therefore an objective social value.

Taking a brief look at the period's view of the relationship between gentility and royal authority, we see that James had described his powers over the nobility and gentry in terms that suggested that his subjects entirely depended on him for status; kings can exalt low things and abase high things, James argued.² Of course, James did not usually put his extreme beliefs into practice; and what he probably meant was that there was merit in the 'low things' a king chose to exalt. However, in conjunction with the sale of titles and James's practice of elevating favourites at his pleasure, such claims could be seen as a threat to social hierarchy and a

tradition that insisted that 'the king cannot make a gentleman', a common boast repeated by Shamont in the play (2.1.299-300), and originally intended as a defence against kings who chose to confer high rank not only on those who were base-born but wicked and worthless.³ In addition, the English ideal of gentility differed in one significant respect from continental ones. In England the king and court did not constitute a power centre overshadowing all others; the English upper classes did not have a court character to the same degree as the French.⁴ In Italy the aristocratic model was a courtly one but the situation in England was different. The British conduct book did not revolve around the court, and the ideal the gentleman served was that of the common weal, not the king; the crisis of 1642 was the escalation of this conflict of loyalties. Court service was a commendable occupation for someone who was already a gentleman; the king was the 'fount of honour' in the sense of honours but he could not inject gentility into an aspiring courtier's blood. The potential conflict between the gentleman's honour and royal authority conduct book authors resolve by stating that the gentleman should assert his honour over all except his king. A gentleman should not tolerate being 'dishonoured by anie whosoeuer, except it bee by his Majestie, who maie dispose of our liues at his pleasure' (IYNM, p.235). Even such docile language is not without its problems - the king can dispose of his subjects' lives, but life is not the same as honour; other voices suggested more plainly that even a royal command to refuse a challenge ought to be disobeyed because 'a

man must risk for a prince life, but not honour'.⁵ Similarly, Shamont neatly solves the problem by submitting his life to the king but not his honour (2.1.281-82). Honour remains the inviolable centre of self, superior to life itself and beyond the reach of authority. Proof that the gentleman's proud assertion of honour was seen as a threat to royal authority can be found in James's proclamation against duelling in 1610 and his famous Edict in 1613. In his proclamation duelling is regarded as 'manifest violation of Our Laws and Authority'.⁶ When a gentleman took the law into his own hands he was depriving the king and state of their due and right (IYNM, pp.239-40). The play solves the problem by suggesting that only the gentleman who is aware of the obligations to the ethic associated with his rank is a good courtier.

The opening scene establishes the play's concern with the difficulty in knowing others and in establishing social value in an objective way, foreshadowing a division which Shamont cannot tolerate, that between one's self and public perceptions of it. Instead of seeing Shamont and drawing our own conclusions, we first hear about him from two different commentators. Shamont is described by Gentleman 2 as a gentleman who has 'that strength of manly merit in him' (1.1.14) but as 'a vain-glorious coxcombe' by Gentleman 4 (1.1.29). That reputation can only provide us with fictional, subjective accounts of real people rather than objective truth is further suggested by the terms used to describe social representations of personal value. There is a reference to the 'abject story' of disgrace

which Shamont would disdain to even hear (1.1.18). Gentleman 2 also refers to the 'growing story' of Shamont's precise valour and love of a good reputation (1.1.25), adding that he has told it 'to much losse' (1.1.27). In other words, value is a matter of representation as much as it is a matter of content. The adventures of selfhood as this is affected by public perceptions and the social relations that surround it also recur in the discussion between the Lady and Shamont's brother, a soldier, in 2.1. Personal value is reflected in the people that surround us. If a woman is married to an ignorant man, then the world will regard her as wanton even if she is faithful; but if she marries a wise man, she avoids dishonour even if she succumbs to temptation because 'his beleev'd wisdom keeps out all' (2.1.18-30). For Shamont there can be no discrepancy between personal value and its public representation; accordingly, he assigns the status of objective truth to subjective accounts of personal worth as these are contained in someone's 'name' or story; and quite often someone's name can replace the actual person by having the same effect. Shamont becomes ill simply by hearing of disgrace (1.1.74-76); he displays all the physical symptoms of anger by listening to Gentleman 1 as he recounts the story of Lapet's cowardice (1.1.89-104); and he does not allow Lapet to assume 'the name of Gentleman' (1.1.132-39). Conversely, the very mention of Shamont's name is unbearable to Lapet (3.2.111-12). Shamont is upset by his brother's courtship of the Lady because so far he has used her name as a cure on the fame and reputation of women (2.1.211-21); and

he is concerned not about his goodness for itself but for 'the glorious name 'tis knowne by' (5.2.50).

The discrepancy between social representations of value and inward selfhood does not mean that the former are misleading or irrelevant; only that they should be based on rational judgement rather than constructed through an imagination distorted by passions or humours. In fact, the play suggests that authority relies on the wide acceptance of a set of values which support order. Without this, the relations of prince to subject, master and servant are disturbed and the opinions of all are equally valid. When order is confused it becomes impossible to say what is right; one effect of this can be seen in the subplot involving Lapet. With his book, 'The up-rising of the kick, and the downfall of the Duello', Lapet attempts to subvert the social consensus which has assigned a kick the status of an insult and subjugate social values to his individual interests; but a master who subverts order in this way ends up being kicked by his servants (3.1.63-68). The madman's subplot is a further dramatization of this nightmare of subjectivism and the social confusion that follows it, showing how passions invalidate one's rational judgement by distorting the imagination. The man affected by disturbed humours either abolishes difference or creates it where it does not exist. The madman will court women indiscriminately, often preferring laundresses to empresses (1.1.51-58); but he can also hire men to beat up the soldier for no real reason, apart from what in his imagination appears to be a difference in

status (3.1.82-89). His imagination also distorts reality by assigning external categories the value of substantive ones. The quarrel between the madman and the soldier started because the soldier was taller than his brother; but more importantly, the madman's mind represented the difference to him as something worth losing one's sleep over (5.1.23-30). The distortion of reality by assigning a substantive status to superficial categories can also be seen in Shamont's tendency to confuse honour with reputation. The duke appropriately describes Shamont as a 'mis-conceiver' (2.1.251); the man affected by passions, like the madman, misunderstands all he sees. In the subplot, the madman is so lost 'in the wild waies of passion, that he's sensible/ Of nought but what torments him' (1.1.49-50). Like Shamont's, his senses are enslaved to the illusions his imagination presents to him.

Shamont's idealism does act as a distorting mirror for reality; but seen against the background of Lapet's subplot, he represents, as Lewis remarks on Don Quixote, 'the quixotic attitude to the environing world, which, if it lends qualities to things they do not possess, restores the balance by not bestowing on any existence quite the harshness of the analytic eye of common sense'.⁷ Shamont may be oversensitive and his valour too 'nice' but this is preferable to Lapet's moral anaesthesia of which his immunity to pain is only a symptom. Lapet's excessive reliance on rationality is another way of distorting reality. In 3.2 tortuous reasoning allows Lapet to conclude that honour cannot be lost with a kick, which is

simply the fury of a foot stamped upon 'the hinder quarter of a man' which is 'a place very unfit for honour' (3.2.1-6). Instead of enlightening reality, Lapet's language distorts it. The mind can easily deceive itself through conceptualization and over-codification; like the madman's, Lapet's mind mistakes its representations of experience for reality. His rationality reduces experience to terms, tables and definitions. This, however, is only a subjective representation of reality; and one which, like all codes, does not take into account the exigencies of life and feeling - the fact that, as Shamont does, one may judge a kick more by the shame it incurs than the physical pain it causes (1.1.108-109, 3.2.52-53). Shamont realizes what Lapet does not - that the gentleman's honour decrees that the body is sacred and untouchable because it is the symbolic space of an independent conscience.

The function of reputation is to establish a set of widely accepted values, which, as I mentioned earlier, is essential to order and authority. What Lapet does is deny this consensus and make of morality a totally subjective matter; the value of honour and reputation consists in protecting from the deception that subjectivism introduces. Like the madman's subplot, where men are mistaken for women in disguise, Lapet's subplot shows how the mind can transform sensory data into subjective truths. Lapet's insensitivity to the blows suggests that morality is an entirely subjective matter; to Lapet the 'twinge byth' nose' is a cure for headache, not a public disgrace (3.2.74-76). It is the mind that turns a blow into an

insult; sensory stimuli are important but do not constitute in themselves an incitement to moral action. Lapet does not realize that a kick is symbolic of a moral insult.

In the absence of authority and hierarchy, the social and political world becomes theatrical and the evidence of the senses is deceptive. It is not possible to make a valid judgement on the basis of a man's outside. Appearances are not reliable because nature is not in agreement with the social hierarchy; it can therefore no longer be understood by looking. Shamont thinks that Lapet looks as much like a man as anyone (1.1.83). The ambiguities of this world and the problem of social identity are also underlined through the sexual confusion that the madman's imagination creates (1.1.207-208). Words and symbols are as unreliable as faces. Lapet, who has unjustly assumed the name of gentleman, can also 'shew my armes and all' (1.1.135), proof which, of course, is equally deceptive (1.1.135-43). Lapet is later shown to be willing to renounce his arms, the 'symbols of gentrie' as unreliable, although they have been 'shewn and seen' (4.1.267-71). His name has been similarly manipulated by the herald, who had to invent a fictitious account of its story (4.1.272-79). The madman is courteous to nothing (1.1.186); words and gestures have been emptied of their meaning and context. As in The Humorous Lieutenant, symbolic purposes have replaced substantive ones, on both a social and a personal level. As a result, passion becomes mere gesturing in the courtship rituals and trust is impossible. The Cupid, a lady in disguise,

trusted the duke's kinsman and gave him her honour, but her confidence was betrayed (3.1.4-6); she had to adopt this shape because she cannot be herself (3.1.32). The madman despises all forms of pretence, of which the greatest one is that of love, the 'dissembler' whose sole purpose is to deceive humans (3.3.29-30). In a world of unreliable symbols, gestures and words, the need to subject all to the empirical test becomes imperative. A man can no longer be judged from his outside; he must be touched and tried for his gentility. The appropriation of the symbols of gentility by undeservers means that now people must undergo physical tests to prove their status. Gentleman 1 has the difficult task of finding suitable servants for the duke:

...there's no judgement

Goes true upon mans out-side, there's the mischief:

He must be touch'd and try'd, for gold or drosse.

(4.1.169-71).

The problem is that 'every one goes so like a gentleman,/ 'Tis hard to find a difference, but byth' touch' (4.1.176-77). Appearances, on which social representations of value depend, can no longer be relied upon to provide reliable information on a person's inwardness.

Even Shamont does not seem to be immune to the complications of the subjective representations of social value. Despite the sacrosanct status Shamont grants his conscience and his greater awareness of the inward nature of honour, compared with Lapet, Shamont's gentility is not

entirely self-referential; what he has suffered is not an insult to a sense of honour that can be located within him; he has been disgraced 'publicly' (2.1.273). The honour of his name is a matter of personal conscience as well as of public approval. It is a kind of fiction subject to external evaluation (4.1.92-100, 5.2.47-66). Unlike the courtiers, he is morally autonomous; but he also seeks the approval of an environment whose values he has rejected. Alvis has argued that Shakespeare's Roman heroes are exposed to a common dilemma because they dedicate themselves to the judgement of a world they had sought to transcend: the glorified individualist seeks godlike superiority over lesser men but remains always dependent as long as he relies upon lesser men to confirm his transcendence.⁸ Shamont is a man for whom the relationship he has to others has acquired precedence over the one he has with himself. His reputation is his self-concept; or, as Bacon observed in 1612 in his essay 'Of men in great places'

Certainly great persons had need to borrow other men's opinions to think themselves happy; for if they judge by their own feeling, they cannot find it: but if they think with themselves what other men think of them, and that other men would be fain as they are, then they are happy as it were by report; when perhaps they find the contrary

within.⁹

That Shamont's idea of himself is externally conditioned is evident in the way he describes his dishonour: he is 'asham'd to be seene' and hates it when the duke asks to see him because he does not wish to be drawn 'into mens eyesight' (2.1.269-75). He does not want to be seen by the Lady (3.2.105-106) or by anyone else for long (5.2.25-26). Away from the court, there are 'no eyes/ Shoot their sharp pointed scornes upon my shame' (5.2.9-10). Shamont sees himself through the eyes of others.

B. Private Virtue, Public Office

Yet, although he seeks the approval of his environment, Shamont is differentiated from the other courtiers, who pursue the same. Shamont does not display his virtue for the sake of 'shew or profit' as others do (4.1.73-75). Authenticity, in the sense of constancy to one's self, is what differentiates Shamont's virtue from that of other courtiers; this inner consistency is the play's ideal of gentry virtue. In public life this consistency is expressed in disinterestedness. Lapet is willing to sell himself and bribe others (1.1.142-43, 4.1.250-51, 4.1.294, 5.3.72-73), or to feign death if his safety requires it; but Shamont will not be bought with riches and honours (4.1.122-23) or pretend that he was not aware of the duke's order so as to avoid his anger (4.1.69-72). The unified self does not need to feign for the sake of sexual or political favours, material reward or fear of punishment. The gentle conscience has escaped from the level of punishment and reward - seen in Lapet's relation to the clown and that of the duke to his courtiers - because it has internalized the dictates of honour and morality. This explains why part of the vocabulary Shamont uses to express his response to the duke's insult refers to his need for external approbation and part of it suggests that he also locates gentility within him. The conflict is not simply one of honour versus service but of soul versus authority; Shamont loses his peace, not only his name when the duke insults him (2.1.242, 2.1.295-96, 3.2.46-47). At the level of the

conscience, there are no distinctions between prince and subject. The madman, who is the duke's kinsman, proves the ultimate equality of the soul, of the 'impartiall essence' (1.1.251).

Honour is therefore an ideal of inner consistency and as such it is connected with the gentleman's sense of identity. Without honour, man loses his form and becomes fragmented and unnatural. For Shamont, Lapet is 'an injury to nature' (1.1.110). Lapet's herald has had to carve out a new identity for him. The constant shifts of identity are a feature of the mind of the madman, who changes his mood from one moment to the next (1.1.51-65); he is a 'man in fragments' (1.1.241). The purpose of the cure the Cupid tries to effect for him is to focus all his wild passions on one point, love (3.1.12-13). Shamont possesses the inner unity which can rise above the instability of the self seen in the madman, Lapet and the other courtiers. He is at his most vulnerable when this inner unity is threatened (2.1.51-52, 5.2.13-22, 5.2.66, 5.3.97-104). Honour is humanity itself and Lapet does a wrong to mankind in existing; Shamont urges him to die because he wishes to 'preserve mans forme from shame' (1.1.129). Dishonour is unnatural and subhuman: Lapet is 'a thing that takes a blow' (1.1.151), 'a monster' (1.1.153). Without honour, there is no sense of identity, just the constant shifting that makes appearances so unreliable. In discussing the ideal of the centered self in Jonson, Greene points out that 'the self which is not at home paints, faints, invents, gossips, alters its manner and passion as whim or necessity dictates'. According to him,

Protean man, man without core and substance is the subject of Volpone: the vicious freedom of altering the self at will has the effect of reducing characters to 'subhuman grotesques'.¹⁰ It is this abandonment of moral constancy that makes Lapet so ridiculous and so sinister at the same time; he is not true to the symbols of gentility he possesses or to his name. The ability to switch from one conversational style to another seen in the soldier's courtship of the Lady is also part of this ability to change the way the self is perceived at will.

This inner stability which is the essence of honour the court, with its emphasis on obedience and dissimulation, threatens. Court society inevitably results in a fragmentation of whole beings into contradictory qualities. Gentleman 1 emphasizes how difficult it is for a courtier to win favour in an environment that prohibits violent conflict. He is just and kind but also in part valiant; 'but it's hard to be perfect' (4.1.166-67). For Shamont, the assumption of roles is problematic when these are incompatible with the self and any calculated presentation of the self is an affront to morality. For the sake of maintaining his individuality, Shamont breaches the basic rule of court life, the avoidance of all conflict; and he would rather be impolite to the duke than tell a lie (4.1.69-72). Gentleman 4 has previously remarked on Shamont that 'set but aside his valour, no vertue,/ Which is indeed, not fit for any Courtier' (1.1.31-32). What the play shows, however, is that valour is virtue. It is this interrelationship between moral and physical courage that Gentleman 4

has missed. The subplot suggests that the inability to assert one's honour equates the courtiers, who would not hesitate to take blows from the duke (2.1.255-60), with clowns. After 2.1, where Shamont refuses to serve the duke because of the insult he has suffered, Act 3 shows the effects of the position on the other extreme. The clown must declare that he is willing to endure anything before Lapet can employ his services (3.2.130-78). This foreshadows the action in 4.1, where the duke discharges his officers and asks them to find men to serve him who will not protest about the strokes of his anger (4.1.147-53). The courtier who is not constant to his gentry ethic of honour is very close to Lapet who gladly renounces his gentility for the sake of getting an office at court (4.1.247-64). He that renounces his gentility for gain is 'too base to make a vassaile on' (5.3.73); great place requires inward constancy. The ability to assert one's gentry authority is a requisite rather than an obstacle to serving a prince. Honour and service are not irreconcilable but indispensable to each other because private virtue precedes public action and gentility precedes office, as the duke admits in 5.3.92-93: a prince cannot make a gentleman because such power lies within the self in the form of 'merit, manners,/ And in-borne vertue'; he can only enhance and reward gentility.

The subplots involving the clown and Lapet and the madman are a dramatization of the anarchy that follows the loss of individuality; a lack of inner consistency results in a lack of order. The clown and Lapet and their upper-class equivalents, the courtiers, enjoy their service irrespective of its

morality; this creates a world where causes are unrelated to effects, people carry out actions without understanding their meaning and suffer from situations for which they are not responsible. The madman has hired rogues to beat the soldier for no apparent reason (3.1.82-89); Lapet is beaten by the madman, whom he has never met before (3.4.61-63); and the duke wishes to find men who will not be too punctual in matters of honour and will not complain about the strokes of his anger, even if they are unpredictable and unjustified (4.1.147-53).

Courtship is one variety of the theatricality the court encourages. In 2.1, the scene where the soldier courts the Lady, even the chair plays its part in the performance; it is bent 'amorously' (2.1.54). The madman's subversive mimicry of the soldier draws attention to the insincerity and artificiality of the language of courtship: smiles, gestures and other 'fine things' are of no value because they have the purpose of catching a woman, and with more success than plain and unadorned virtue (2.1.70-85). Courtship prevents moral discrimination because it allows symbolic/aesthetic matters to take precedence over substantive/ethical ones and replaces the integrity and unity of the self with an emphasis on the external. It is a highly stylized mode of conduct which goes against authenticity because manners which do not correspond to inwardness result in the alienation of one's true self. The impersonation that the madman makes of the soldier underlines the fact that the latter's courtship is itself a form of impersonation, a deception.

The confusion of appearance and content that the courtly emphasis on stylization creates explains why a touch with a switch on one's body constitutes an insult to one's status. Shamont asserts his moral freedom from the court, but he is a victim to the same power relationships which make gestures so symbolic of value in the play. Jaeger, writing about court life in an earlier period but generalizing about all situations where authority is concentrated in a single person, observes that policy and competition for favour

make of speech and action something quite different from what they are in everyday life. Words, gestures, intonation, and facial expression all bear meaning, express policy, no act or gesture is random. Circumstances in court society subject action to etiquette, prescribe a stylized speech and posture, force character itself into preformed moulds, order human beings into typical constellations, and guide them along typical chains of events.¹¹

Shamont's inflexible sense of honour risks the same over-codification of conduct that is seen in aspects of court life that Shamont rejects. The court encourages an obsession with the nuances of conduct and this results in the intricate courtship ritual and Shamont's 'nice' valour.

In 3.3 the madman provides a parallel to Shamont's dislike of any kind of stylization that his position as a courtier might impose on him. He tells the Cupid that it is better for a man to wear loose garments because they are more manly and a more suitable preparation for shrouds when death comes; many men endure tight clothes for the sake of looking good (3.3.12-25). Following the fashion replaces inner stability with an emphasis on the external. Artificiality and over-elaboration - and the court of the play has lots of both in its uncomfortable clothes, speech, code of honour and courtship ritual - can only have the effect of making life itself 'an exercise in obedience to unnatural conventions'.¹² Wisdom consists in a balance between constancy to one's self and the conventions of social living. The Cupid's reply to the madman is that one may be handsome and still avoid pain or pride; the madman insists that 'there is no handsomenesse,/ But has a wash of Pride and Luxury' (3.3.25-28). After this, the madman also sings a song that renounces all vain delights as folly; there is nothing sweet in life apart from melancholy, silence, isolation from the world and death (3.3.35-53). The song links the madman to Shamont, who has earlier renounced all light things because 'th'are all but shames' (1.1.212). The fact that the madman's melancholy is the source of his anger (3.4.5-7, 3.1.34-35) also links Shamont to the madman; a rigid code of honour can lead to the compulsive behaviour a madman's 'humour' creates.

The sweeping demands of Shamont's code of honour suit his search for absolute standards untarnished by compromise such as can be found in

the Platonic realm of ideas. Manhood is the purest essence of being ('love to manhood, ownes the purer troath', 1.1.264), just as Platonic love is the purest essence of love. He describes the Lady as having the perfection of a Platonic idea: her excellence 'sparkles/ More in divinity, then mortall beauty' (4.1.34-35). She appreciates Shamont because he loved for goodness, not for wealth or lust, and courted the beauty of the mind, not the body (3.2.119-21). Shamont is disinterested in both his love and his sense of honour, in both private and public life. In public life he is immune to the financial recompense the duke offers in order to offset the insult to Shamont's honour; in private life, Shamont's love is disinterested because it does not require sexual favours in return. The connection between honour and Platonic love becomes clarified when we understand that honour was rooted in the doctrine of the invisible world; 'a universally accepted notion which simply asserted the existence of an invisible world of spiritual phenomena outside, above, yet somehow impinging upon this temporal world of matter. The invisible world was fundamentally the Christian heaven and the Platonic ideal realm'.¹³ Honour is part of this 'invisible world of spiritual phenomena and of platonically absolute values'.¹⁴ Shamont is precise and punctual in matters of valour and honour (2.1.246-47); his honour even comes before life (2.1.281-82) and brotherhood (4.1.23-26, 53-54). Shamont's platonically absolute values are not tenable in either private or social living. When his brother courts his mistress Shamont begins to recognize the weakness of human nature;

although he trusts her, 'goodnesse, whose inclosure is but flesh,/ Holds out oft times but sorrily' (2.1.61-62). Platonic values cannot be maintained for too long because nature makes demands of its own. Shamont finds that it is not possible to transcend nature and turn himself into pure will; man's feelings are often stronger than his will or resolution (5.3.100-101).

In conclusion, the play is opposed to all patterns of conduct which are formalized, stereotyped or rigid. Order is necessary in both social and mental life; the madness of the duke's kinsman is the complete disordering of experience which is also found on a social level. However, it can also lead to over-codification and a reductive attitude to experience. One needs to be flexible and aware that no code should be assigned the status of an absolute value. Neither courtliness nor honour are challenged values in the play but both of them are deceptive when followed without the feeling that gives them meaning and authenticity. What the dialogue between the Cupid and the madman suggests is that social codes and individual feeling should be mutually supportive. The separation of mask and person, forms and inwardness which court life encourages is seen in the forms of courtship which are an imitation of true passion, in the madness of the duke's kinsman which separates the mind from the movement of the body and in the insistence of courtiers on submissiveness. The self-division encouraged by court life goes against the integrity, nobility and sanity of the unified self which is Shamont's ideal and in which there is no distance between public role and inwardness.

Shamont has a romantic view of political activity, one dominated by the energies of charismatic individuals who have managed to transcend the mundane political world and the political rationalization represented by the courtiers' insistence on amicability and Lapet's book against the duel. Like Euphanes in The Queen of Corinth and Charles in The Elder Brother he prefers conflict with authority to a compromise in the standards that accrue from his status; the good courtier should be a good gentleman. With Caratach of Bonduca he shares the ambivalence between a sense of selfhood that often demands Stoic withdrawal in order to preserve its absolute standards and the need for confirmation from the social relations that surround the self.

Social values inevitably involve compromise but they also provide a wide consensus on certain values; without this general agreement, order would be impossible because all values would be entirely dependent on the individual's subjectivity. The social realm precludes platonically absolute values but it also protects from dangerous subjectivism. The play anticipates the sense of absurdity which comes from an inversion of values caused by subjectivism in The Noble Gentleman.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Queen of Corinth (1616-17)¹: Gentility and Patronage

A. The Historical Context

The most substantial contribution to the play is that of Suzanne Gossett who classifies The Queen of Corinth among a diverse group of plays which present us with a 'decadent Jacobean exploration of rape, with its heretical suggestion that rapists may be heroes and that women may love their attackers'. She relates this to the decadent atmosphere at court; Gossett explains that after the deaths of Prince Henry and Salisbury, and especially after 1616, with the fall of Somerset and the rise of Buckingham, sexual vice was increasingly conspicuous at the Jacobean court.² The play, however, flaunts its divergence from the Jacobean courtly ethos. The wise distribution of royal patronage and bounty, the necessity for decorum and the importance of separating public roles from private ones, all were particularly topical issues at the time the play was written.

The Queen of Corinth is an implicit contrast to contemporary court morality, particularly the lack of courtly decorum and the interference of the monarch's affections in public life. James displayed his affection for his male favourites in public. In Osborne's Traditionall Memoyres on the Raigne of King James the First, it is noted that the king indulged in

displays of affection with Somerset and Buckingham, who exceeded women in their looks and wanton gestures; the king behaved without discretion, 'kissing them after so lascivious a mode in publick'.³ Even early on in the reign, commentators agreed that his court was in stark contrast to the decorous court of Elizabeth. As early as 1603, in the early weeks of James's reign, Sir Roger Wilbraham, one of the state officials whom James inherited from Elizabeth I, in comparing James to Elizabeth, noted that the Queen was 'solemn and ceremonious', whereas the king neglected the usual ceremony.⁴ Lady Anne Clifford, at the age of thirteen, registered in her diary in 1603 her disappointment at the 'change between the fashion of the Court as it is now and of that in the Queen's time'.⁵ When Christian IV of Denmark visited England a masque was performed, during which most of those who participated became sick, a much-quoted incident that reminds us that the court was not always the model of courtliness depicted in the masques.⁶ Sir John Harington, in his letter to Mr Secretary Barlow in 1606, complained that

I have much marvelled at these strange pegeantries,
and they do bring to my remembrance what passed of
this sort in our Queens days; of which I was
sometime an humble presenter and assistant: but I
neer did see such lack of good order, discretion,
and sobriety, as I have now done.⁷

The literary equivalent of such responses was the phenomenon of plays alluding to Queen Elizabeth and her court and contrasting it with the disorderly and uncereemonious one presided over by James, which appeared as early as 1604.⁸ Although not alluding specifically to Elizabeth, The Queen of Corinth may be capitalizing on this contemporary association. The representation of a golden age whose virtues are each matched by a contemporary vice could easily point to the present through the past, as Fulke Greville knew well. The same method was used by Sir Walter Raleigh in his History of the World, although he denounced the charge that 'in speaking of the past, I point at the present, and taxe the vices of those that are yet lyuing, in their persons that are long since dead.'⁹ Thomas Heywood in 1612 summed up the relationship of foreign history to his audience: 'if wee present a forreigne history, the subiect is so intended, that in the liues of Romans, Grecians, or others, either the vertues of our Country-men are extolled, or their vices reproued'.¹⁰ The Greek setting of The Queen of Corinth barely disguises its contemporary parallels, especially for an audience trained to look for them.

The intertwining of the language of love and patronage was particularly relevant to the court of James I where courtiers were elevated in accordance with their charm. Buckingham, a remarkably handsome man whom James showered with gifts and titles, became a Groom of the Bedchamber in April 1615; in 1617 James created him Earl of Buckingham in January and in February he welcomed him as a member of the Privy

Council, an honour Prince Charles did not receive until 1622.¹¹ The overlapping of public and private was the hallmark of the new courtly ethos. As Hurstfield points out, Queen Elizabeth had a very real affection for her favourites but she tried to keep her emotional life separate from her political judgements; it is the early seventeenth century which shows us, under the Stuarts, the decay of patronage into favouritism.¹² The proper distribution of patronage was the major expression of royal justice; but King James had failed to maintain the image of an austere royal justice, unencumbered by personal feeling. I would certainly agree with Akrigg that his theory in Basilikon Doron of the court as a centre of justice and cultivation of merit was out of line with his practices.¹³

The Queen of Corinth enacts a mode of government and a relationship between gentility and royal authority that James and his entourage could not live up to. It evokes images of a golden age, of a court governed by the principles of justice and wisdom, reason and decorum. The benevolent but austere royal authority of the play ensures a harmonious balance between love and government, private and public. The queen becomes the spokesman for rational government and the precedence of public interest over private feeling, in other words the precedence of gentility and merit over the subjective appetites of the monarch. At the very beginning of the play the necessity of sacrificing the private life is stressed. Although the queen would like to have Merione as her daughter-in-law, now that the matter concerns the 'common good' she

will not only subdue her own affections, but command her son's as well (1.1.37-39). She pretends to be angry because of Euphanes' intended marriage to another woman, but to try him only: 'for though I love thee,/ I can subdue my selfe' (3.1.322-23). By contrast, Crates and Prince Theanor are interested only in accomplishing their aims, even though the state may sink as a result (1.1.76-77). The queen chooses her favourites in accordance with the dictates of rational judgement; her son chooses them by the demands of his appetite.

The play does not suggest that a prince should make a conscious effort to subdue his private roles to the public one; but that in wise authority, judgement and affection, public and private will be identified. There is no suggestion that private and public are, or should be, different, competing spheres. In fact, what is remarkable about the play is its insight into how politics is mediated through the personality; the main motive to the general good, the peace that was signed, was the enemy's admiration for the wisdom of Leonidas and his valour. Friendship was ratified with peace (1.1.9-23). The language of politics is related to the language of eros: for Merione's love, Agenor will forgive the forfeit of ten thousand lives that would have fallen under the sword of war; this general good the two countries owe to Agenor's affection for Merione (1.2.31-36). In The Queen of Corinth politics is inevitably personal, and therefore discourses of love and friendship always bear upon public transactions. The Aristotelian

connection between ethics and politics is expressed in the play in the parallels between love and government.

Theanor represents a highly personalized form of government which privileges the feelings of the monarch over the interests of the state. This form of government revolves around instinct, favouritism and power instead of reason, healthy patronage and authority. The distinction of the play between power and authority is illustrated in the contrast between the two brothers, Crates and Euphanes, and that between the queen and her son. Euphanes's name means 'illustrious, one that looks noble' (εὐφάνης). He is diametrically opposed to his brother Crates, from the Greek 'cratō' (κρατῶ), meaning 'govern, dominate'. Feminine government revolves around the embodying of positive qualities, on example rather than coercion and force; it is based on the public appeal of authority rather than the oppression of power. It is worth noting that in his letter (1611) to Sir John Harington, Lord Thomas Howard contrasts Elizabeth with James by observing that 'your Queen did talk of her subjects love and good affections, and in good truth she aimed well; our King talketh of his subjects fear and subjection'.¹⁴ Sir John Harington, in his letter (1606) to Robert Markham noted that Elizabeth had a great power to 'gain obedience thus wythout constraint'.¹⁵ The prince represents the male mode of government, which relies on inspiring fear, not awe and respect. Power is also based on instinct and nature; Crates advises Theanor to shake off his mother's fetters and follow nature boldly (1.1.77-81). The feminine mode of government relies on

authority and reason and its expression, decorum. Therefore, seemingly artificial forms can express an emphasis on decorum, superficial and moral. A complete neglect of forms is associated with a deterioration in moral standards. Only Theanor has a great intimacy with his followers and urges them to drop the 'ceremonious forme of duty' (1.1.94). Power relies on violence, whereas authority relies on appropriate forms to exercise control; bloody men like Crates are 'fitter be made publike Hangmen,/ Or butchers call'd, then valiant Gentlemen' (4.4.47-48). The prince and his followers do have a heroic ideal, but one which lacks an ethical basis; their power is unrestrained by law and justice. True valour fights for justice and is imbued with public spirit; the prince eventually acquires the 'true magnanimity' which befits those 'borne highest' instead of the 'desperate bastard vallour' he shared with his inferiors (5.4.4-19). Before this happens, Prince Theanor is associated with Onos in his insistence on power without justice. Onos finds a lame excuse for challenging Euphanes (4.1.81-103). Similarly, the prince is advised by Crates to use Euphanes's restoring the fortune of Conon to him as an excuse for expressing his malice against Euphanes. Finally, power assumes that noble birth automatically brings added privilege, whereas authority suggests that moral superiority should precede social privilege. Crates and the prince share a belief in noble birth as a licence to do as they please. Crates tells Euphanes, his younger brother, that the privilege his birth has bestowed on him should command Euphanes's respect (1.2.161-62). The feminine mode

of government is expressed by Beliza who tells Euphanes that she is not one of those weak ladies who, 'barren of all inward worth', are proud of external things like birth or fortune (1.2.82-86).

Theanor's mode of government requires the withholding of the prince's self: Crates advises prince Theanor that although tempests rage in his heart, all should be calm in his looks (1.1.82-85). The queen, on the other hand, insists that the self must be revealed, not withdrawn from public life; she wears a crystal casement before her heart, through which each honest eye may look into it (3.1.340-41). This transparency is always undermined by the common people who are likely to misconstrue a prince's motives. Since they will judge by appearances only, conforming to moral dictates is not enough. Public ritual must sanctify the claims of power to authority; this means that decorum has a functional role. The queen wishes she were a man so that she could sit down with Euphanes and talk alone, but as she is she cannot because 'there's no skill/ In being good, but in not being thought ill' (3.1.270-71). James voices the same worry in Basilikon Doron

It is a true saying That a King is as one set on a stage,
whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people
gazingly doe behold: and therefore although a King
be never so precise in the discharging of his Office,
the people, who see by the Outward part, will ever

iudge of the substance, by the circumstances.¹⁶

It is this awareness of the moral dimension of both private and public conduct that distinguishes power from authority and the courtier from the common man. For the queen and Euphanes social power presupposes moral authority. This moral authority the queen tries to reassert in her final decision to condemn her son to death: everyone will avoid breaking the laws of a queen who would not spare her own son. Authority must be and appear to others to be disinterested; a queen's heart is public, not private, space.

B. Decorum as a Political Virtue

It is a critical commonplace that whereas the Italian aristocratic ideal, as expressed in Castiglione's Courtier, emphasized the aesthetic element of conduct and personal perfection, to the 'practical-minded English gentry', honour was interpreted in the context of the Ciceronian ideal of citizenship.¹⁷ Nevertheless, both ideals accepted that 'decorum' was a political virtue necessary for a gentleman because by his meek, gentle, and civil behaviour he was able to win all men's favour, so as to be employed by his majesty in serious and important affairs (IYNM, pp.137-38). The relationship between personal charm and political influence can be traced back to Castiglione: the aim of the perfect courtier is by means of his accomplishments 'so to win for himself the mind and favour of the prince he serves that he can and always will tell him the truth about all he needs to know, without fear or risk of displeasing him'.¹⁸ In Book 4 Ottaviano remarks that those 'elegances' which are effeminate may in a courtier be advantageous and praiseworthy, as long as they are directed to their proper end, the instruction of the prince.¹⁹

In this light, the emphasis on decorum and temperance is not only social but also political, and Euphanes utilizes courtliness in controlling the intemperance of the prince and securing his queen's favour. Euphanes' attitude of 'passive fortitude' (3.1.247), 'gentlenesse and courtesie' (2.4.26), 'an open and a liberall sweetnesse' (2.4.29) is a political

instrument; when he denies that the prince has been oppressing him because he does not wish 'to be made the ginne/ To unscrew a Mothers love unto her Son' (3.1.292-93), this virtuous act doubles up as an effective political ploy, making the queen all the more enamoured of him. On the other hand, Crates is a typical court malcontent who is unable to see the substance behind the forms which 'travell and Court Holy-water' have sprinkled upon his brother. In The Queen of Corinth a reciprocal educational relationship exists between prince and courtier. The queen has a responsibility to make her courtier apt at public service, and in creating Euphanes she is like 'a choyce Workman', who 'having fram'd a Master-peece, doth reape/ An universall comendations' (3.1.254-56). The courtier also has a responsibility to educate the prince in justice and righteousness and, as Castiglione diplomatically phrased it, cultivate the merit he has by birth; and to do this, he needs personal charm.

The trust in forms that is seen in The Queen of Corinth derives from the belief that forms could never exist in a vacuum; Onos, who lacks the right consciousness, cannot sustain a gentleman's airs for too long. Even in the absence of the right inwardness, appropriate forms could generate appropriate conduct. Sharpe points out that 'all ceremony involves an element of trust, a willingness to respect the public role even if its bearer may be imperfect; the hope is that the honour paid to the role will have a psychological effect on the individual'.²⁰ Euphanes prefers to reform others through his example (3.1.232-34). The authority of Euphanes is indeed, as

his brother charges him, one of forms, but forms which invest power with public ritual and authority. Euphanes's decorum includes temperance, rhetorical skills and moral discrimination, the ability to recognize when moral duty changes. It is not an austere ideal of smug righteousness, or a superficial one of charm and beauty; it is Stoic fortitude and 'a temper malice cannot move/ To exceed the bounds of judgement' (3.1.64-65). In the play those who have decorum also have temperance and the reverse; or as Cicero has phrased it, 'what is proper is morally right, and what is morally right is proper'.²¹

C. Patronage and Gentility

The queen's role in the play is to guarantee justice; she is 'a Queene/ And Patronesse to Justice' (5.2.108-109). The proper distribution of patronage is the major expression of this duty. Patronage was important for a king; 'for a King not to be bountiful were a fault' was the defence made by Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, to criticism of James I's reward and spending in Parliament in 1610, a statement which echoed fifteenth-century humanist theorists who, in the mirror for princes literature, stressed that among the greatest virtues of all were liberality and magnificence.²² This, however, did not abolish the need for establishing limits to patronage. The ethics of benefits and office-holding was of great relevance to the period. Venal office-holding was thriving and Smith reminds us of the resentment expressed in the Parliaments of James I towards an extravagant and scandalous court where 'he is accounted the wisest merchant that gains most: so that if such comes to offices and places of trust, he thinks it best to advance his profit'.²³ The humanistic basis of the Renaissance ethic for office-holding was best captured in Cicero's belief that by nature men are born for the sake of other men: 'in this direction we ought to follow Nature as our guide, to contribute to the general good by an interchange of acts of kindness, by giving and receiving, and thus by our skill, our industry, and our talents to cement human society more closely, man to man'.²⁴ This is

the social bonding Beliza alludes to (1.2.110-29). Lesser men, like the miserly uncle of Onos and the courtiers that serve the prince, lack the gentry ethic of generosity, which is the source of all other virtues; of a wise, magnanimous judgement that scorns insults, and even of courage. Euphanes tells Leonidas and Agenor that he will offer himself up as his country's sacrifice, an innocent sacrifice (4.3.53). It is therefore not simply a domesticated, courtly virtue, but also a heroic quality. Onos, his uncle and his tutor are parsimonious cowards.

In a thrust at James's favouritism, Beliza observes that when benefits are conferred on unworthy men that put them to bad uses, the person who bestows them is partly guilty because he lacks judgement; by contrast, when we do favours to those that make them grounds on which they build their noble actions we enrich ourselves (1.2.94-101). Beliza is indebted to Euphanes for providing her with a worthy subject on which to exercise her bounty; she shares his glory. Their relationship in the private sphere is a mirror of the queen's relationship to her courtiers in the public one. Crates complains that Euphanes has complete control of all offices in the kingdom and is the patron of all intellectual activity (3.1.1-14), a reference to Buckingham's control of the court; but the play implies that such delegation of power is acceptable as long as a benefit is bestowed on a worthy subject. Euphanes is not raised for himself but for his friends (2.4.125-26). A prince calls his judgement in question when he bestows benefits on those who do not deserve them, as Theanor does. Onos was,

like Euphanes, sent by Beliza to travel, but travel did not have the same good effect on him. His tutor believes that they have brought home a complete gentleman for the country's good, but it is obvious that Beliza's generosity has been wasted on him. Conon states that travel has made Euphanes far more excellent because it gives people understanding, an active mind and the ability to mend their own manners through other people's example (2.4.75-81). Crates, however, has no belief in travelling because he does not realise that it has a different effect on different minds. When Onos (Greek for mule, but perhaps also a pun on the Latin *honor*=honour) appears, Crates tells Euphanes to 'behold a model of your minds and actions' (2.4.143). Crates is, of course, wrong in regarding Onos as a model of the kind of courtliness that his brother embodies. The metaphor of a great building which becomes better with labour is also used of Onos, but the connection between Onos and Euphanes only underlines the difference (1.3.29-30). Although Beliza has financed the travels of both Euphanes and Onos, her patronage was wasted on Onos.

Despite the queen's statement that 'they are fools that hold them dignified by blood,/ They should be only made great that are good' (3.1.260-61), the play does not endorse social levelling. Euphanes is a member of the gentry, with a deep awareness of his descent, whereas Onos and his circle are 'Peasants with your bought Gentry' (4.1.148). They display all the marks of gentility but in a comical version; courtiers are born, not made. Onos is instructed all the time by his tutor to maintain a traveller's posture

because it does not come naturally to him; noble manners cannot be aped, only enhanced by those who naturally possess them. Onos has to be reminded to 'beare your selfe like a Gentleman' (2.4.148). To him gentility means drinking, whoring and quarrelling; he is the product of a society where these are the four virtues that are in fashion (1.3.52-57) and 'all businesse whatsoever/ That may concerne a Gentleman' (1.3.48-49). Onos sends out a challenge to Euphanes, then honourably retreats when Euphanes' page invites him to fight with him. It also transpires that in their last journey when their fellow passengers were assaulted by a galley, they hid themselves away (4.1.133-51). Gentility cannot be bought and sold - patronage has its limitations. Onos makes unsuccessful attempts to imitate the courtly language of Euphanes in addressing the prince (3.1.113-19). Affected by the power of love, Onos later speaks in rhyme (4.1.3-8), but he can only provide a parody of the language of courtly love. Thus, language becomes a social and moral index.

One of the pervasive concerns of the play is the nature and purpose of rewards, in both the private and public spheres. For a few kind words, Theanor's servile courtiers 'part with their essence' (1.1.107). Such followers are easily kept silent by the promise of reward or fear (1.1.89-90). True gentlemen, on the other hand, offer their benefits voluntarily, without fear or expectation of reward; they are bound by moral obligations. Beliza refuses to imitate the world who give in order to purchase bondmen, not make worthy friends (1.2.87-89). Theanor's instruments use the same

language, thanking him for his 'bounteous favour' (1.1.100); but gifts that are given as a licence to manipulate others are bribes, not rewards. The nature of the recipient as well as the giver is important for gifts. Furthermore, relations of patronage in the public sphere are reflected by those in the private one. Crates would only provide for Euphanes on condition that he would flatter his servants, sooth his humour, live like a parasite, act as his pander and enter into unjustly grounded quarrels; these are 'the tyrannies/ Most younger Brothers groane beneath' (1.2.177-78). Crates identifies court service with servility and is intrigued that Euphanes does not look upon the fact that he is pointed at as 'the fine Courtier, the womans man' as detracting from his birth or freedom (1.2.192-201). Euphanes is in the service of Beliza but there he is a worthy friend, not a bondman, because he does not have to compromise his gentry assertiveness for the sake of reward. The play suggests that love is the best motive for securing service, not fear or reward. It is the greatest source not only of security, but also of power and influence, which explains the connection between love and government noted earlier. Crates reassures the prince that reward or fear will keep the courtiers silent; however, love protects Euphanes more effectively than force (4.4.11-12). The play shows that venality and fear should not replace love and generosity as the basis of both political and personal bonds. The pursuit of power without duty is presented comically in Onos who is not interested in providing true service; he would be happy to be the prince's follower at a

distance of seven miles. He is the comical version of the more threatening followers that Theanor has.

Like The Nice Valour, this is a play that explores the relationship between gentility and political authority. The mode of government represented by the prince uses patronage in a manner typical of the Jacobean court. The tension between gentry independence and a prince who misuses his powers was well known at the Jacobean court, where the key to favour lay in massaging the king's ego. Euphanes belongs to the social class that had been excluded from the Jacobean court; in retrospect, James's reign was recalled as the reign which had excluded the gentry from the court.²⁵ Euphanes resents the fact that he is forced to bear so many wrongs from the prince: he praises mediocrity, a priceless jewel which only mean men can have but cannot value, 'like the precious Jem,/ Found in the Mukhill by the ignorant Cock' (3.1.208-209). Euphanes makes a proud assertion of his gentry status when the prince insults him by replying that with the best of his followers he was an equal at his lowest ebb and asks him to respect him as a gentleman, since 'five faire Discents I can derive my selfe,/ From Fathers worthy both in Arts and Armes' (3.1.194-95). Euphanes refuses to compromise his gentility for the sake of obedience to the prince. Flatterers create conditions under which tyranny can flourish; the good courtier remains a gentleman. Princes are not to be obeyed if they plan to abuse their followers' service (5.4.199-204). Euphanes retains his judgement and moral discrimination. Theanor's

courtiers have lost their ability to act as free agents and to think independently; if they wish to have the prince's favour and gold, 'no tongues amongst ye' (2.3.26).

The language of benefits and rewards brings together private and public discourses. An ethic of generosity and gratitude becomes the sustenance of both political and personal bonds. Agenor tells the queen that the gift she has given him is so far beyond his means to return, that he must die obliged to her unanswered bounty (1.3.76-80). Generosity and gratitude constitute the axis not only of private relationships but also those of princes to subjects. Euphanes has the pleasure to see and hear the queen, which by her bounty is conferred on him (5.2.28-30). Beliza tells Euphanes that now he shines in a sphere too high for her (3.2.75) but he replies that he has come to give her the man she has made (3.2.84). This connection of the language of service and finance and that of love, evoked in several other parts of the play (1.2.68-71, 3.1.160-63, 5.2.17-19), was not unusual in court life. In her article on Jacobean patronage, Peck points out that in addition to being a special form of general exchange, patronage was also a performance, that is, a 'self-consciously constructed language'. The language of patronage usually combined fiscal vocabulary with the emotions of honour and friendship - the performance of a role of devoted follower and exaggerated language of alliance were taken for granted.²⁶ Financial patronage is never too far from moral responsibility in the play. Among the nobler members of the society of the play there are bonds of

responsibility and duty, which Onos and his uncle and guardian, who tries to kill him in order to get hold of his estate, do not share.

The discourse of Platonic love in the play has a political and moral significance. It symbolizes the detachment of self-interest and instinct from government and a free will unaffected by the promise of reward - sexual gratification in private relationships and offices or gifts in public ones. Like love, government should be based on reason and the objective appreciation of merit rather than instinct and the coercion of threat or profit. Euphanes, who is free from fear, instinct and the pursuit of profit, loves Beliza but looks upon her with reverence, 'as holy men behold the Sun, the Starrs,/ The Temples, and their gods' (1.2.66-67). The political language of Theanor is interlocked with that of lust; if the prince continues to rape women, he will be 'the tyrant to virginity' (4.4.20). Lust is associated with political corruption and venality; Neanthes remarks that in every lustful family the bawd gains more than all the officers in the house (5.1.25-28).

In conclusion, The Queen of Corinth is a contrast of two different modes of government, one based on power and the other on authority; the former involves a control of subjects through rewards and fear, the latter respects the subjects' will and status. The former confuses public and private issues, the latter keeps them in a balance, so that private feeling does not interfere in public matters. The former involves a separation of public forms and inwardness, whereas in the latter there is an awareness of the moral/exemplary dimension of public conduct. Power assumes that

noble birth automatically brings added privilege, whereas authority suggests that moral superiority should precede social privilege. We have already seen similar contrasts in The Humorous Lieutenant where authority provides a model for relationships, public and private, throughout its area of influence. Like The Queen of Corinth, The Humorous Lieutenant and The Nice Valour show authority in an attempt to control the consciousness of inferiors or to divide them into mask and person. Bonduca, The Knight of Malta and The Humorous Lieutenant share the view of The Queen of Corinth that the higher the place, the more thwarted the desire.

As in The Knight of Malta, The Nice Valour, The Scornful Lady and The Little French Lawyer, the social climber has not internalized religious or ethical dictates. Only the gentleman has transcended the level of fear and reward. In these plays, too, the undercurrent of neo-Platonic discourse has social implications. The disinterestedness of public life becomes Platonic love in private life; Platonic love is disinterested because it does not require sexual favours in return.

CHAPTER SIX

The Elder Brother (1625)¹: Educating the Gentleman

A. 'something to make a substance': Wealth and Gentility

The Elder Brother is a study of the complex nexus of relationships between wealth and gentility, learning and authority, chivalric ideals and fashionable manners. The play suggests the difficulty in knowing others, given the disparity between private and public roles, externals and inwardness, appearance and reality. Language is important in knowing others and wielding power over them but, like all semiotic systems, it is plagued by the discrepancy between sign and meaning that makes it so difficult to distinguish those who are only superficially gentlemen, 'the signes of men', and those who are truly noble. Power does reside in language but language supported by actions, where words are really words and not just empty sounds. Similarly, the gentleman must demonstrate his skill in using both words and swords, otherwise, like the words he uses, he will be an empty signifier, the 'signe of man'.

The opening scene sets the tone by establishing the close connection between social values and material considerations. Angellina bestows the expected obedience on her father and in return finds him 'an indulgent Father,/ And open handed' (7-8). The same motif is repeated in the next scene when Brisac, also an indulgent father, refers to Charles's

obligation to provide him with a grandson in terms of 'payment of the debt' (1.2.172). At all levels, not only in family and sexual relationships but also in politics (1.2.229-31), wealth demands obedience in return. These references foreshadow the interchangeability of moral and material currencies in the play. Wealth and social position, especially the former, fully define human beings for the two fathers and representatives of the older generation. Lewis describes the father of the two candidates for his daughter's heart as 'a Gentleman of blood, Monsieur *Brisac*,/ Of a faire state, sixe thousand Crownes *per annum*' (1.1.65-66). He regards Eustace as 'a proper Gentleman' but that is not enough for him to bestow his daughter's hand on Eustace, who must also be the heir (1.2.239-44); and he aptly describes the match as a bargain (1.2.243). This outlook has affected Angellina, who goes even further. For her, wealth does not simply define a gentleman; it constitutes him. She does not care about men who are 'simply themselves', whether they are courtiers or scholars (1.1.80). Selfhood is identified with wealth and tangible blessings, not 'imagin'd Nectar' (1.1.112). Court advancement, learning, youth, valour are 'gawdy nothings' if there is not 'something to make a substance' (1.1.116-17). After *Brisac* has decided to disinherit Charles, he describes him as 'nothing' (2.1.138), a word which is eventually associated with Eustace.

The worrying thing about wealth, then, is not that it can follow feelings and values but that it can displace them; in other words, it can become social as well as financial currency. In the subplot of Lilly and

Brisac wealth becomes a currency which circulates on both a personal and a financial level, and it is this interchangeability of wealth and value that makes the former so threatening. This is seen in Brisac's justice, the scales of which can be tilted by bribery (2.1.43-47); it also explains why profit and lust are interrelated in the subplot. When Brisac attempts to seduce Lilly, she rejects him but he promises to be generous in order to persuade her to 'grant a little' (4.4.85-87). Here, financial value regulates moral values. Andrew does not mind his old master kissing his wife as long as his farm is doubled; in fact, were it not for the name of cuckold, he would let her lie with him (3.2.36-41). Sex earns wealth and, conversely, profit also acts as an aphrodisiac. Andrew paints a disgusting picture of female sexuality:

...these smocke vermin,
How eagerly they leape at old mens kisses,
They licke their lippes at profit, not at pleasure.

(3.2.37-39)

Women consume, so men are forced to provide for them, but they are also the source of prosperity. Lilly is a woman of lax morals but she has a farm to make up for it (2.4.26-27).

The connection between profit and lust in the subplot has the effect of underlining in the main plot the fact that in love worth cannot be replaced by profit. Women seem to be almost tied to their possessions in both the subplot and the main plot but, although the same association between women and land can be found in the story of Charles and

Angellina (3.4.13-14, 3.5.55-59, 3.5.222), here the priorities are reversed. Act 3, Scene 5 may seem to be ambiguous in its intentions. Charles is quickly transformed from the poor dependant he initially appeared to be into a fairy-tale prince offering Angellina titles, land and wealth, at the same time that he asks her if she can 'love for love, and make that the reward' (3.5.162); but the play is careful to suggest that her affections had already begun to veer towards Charles even before his refusal to surrender his birthright. Like Lilly, Angellina is tied to her land, but Charles would not be interested in land alone, if it came without her (3.5.47-59). Money and land do matter but they should not be priorities: '...though land and monies be no happinesse,/ Yet they are counted good Additions' (3.5.106-107). They can enhance what one is, but they cannot make one become what one is not. Wealth is a positive asset so long as one does not make it the reward for love and a substitute for intellectual qualities and moral values.

In the subplot lust has been shown to be mercenary and, appropriately, the love of Charles and Angellina, which is its own reward, is represented as Platonic love. Before meeting Angellina, Charles sounds very much like the Epicoene version of the misanthrope; he cannot even bear noise. The sights, smells and sounds of the wedding celebrations he regards as an annoying intrusion of public life into his privacy. Female beauty becomes the force that leads him into self-knowledge and socializes him: love recalls to the light one who previously was 'a stranger to himselfe and all' (3.5.91). Angellina becomes a Platonic archetype of

perfection, a 'sweet Idea' that Charles has within him (3.5.140). Love is described as a transcendent experience that makes Charles's virtues flourish:

Till I saw those eyes, I was but a lumpe,
 A Chaos of confusednesse dwelt in me;
 Then from those eyes shot Love, and he distinguisht,
 And into forme he drew my faculties;
 And now I know my Land, and now I love too.

(3.5.122-26)

Charles possessed the substance of gentility before but love gives him a social self without which his qualities are of no value; the last line seals the connection between his love for Angellina and his newly found awareness of the duties his status involves.

B. Court Submissiveness and Country Assertion

According to Charles, the purpose of life is 'the knowledge of our selves' (1.2.120); and it is this cultivation of the inner life which the gentry culture represented by his father and Lewis prohibits because it encourages mechanistic habits of thought, summed up in the term 'custom'. The members of the older generation are like empty images moved only by the wheels of custom. Brisac, the representative of the status quo who regulates his life according to custom, is 'a flat dull peece of flegme' and 'a reverend Idoll' (2.1.161-62). The besetting sin of this environment is, as the opening scene suggests, idleness, encouraged by custom. Angellina is the spoilt daughter to Lewis, an indulgent father, living a life 'without variety or action' endorsed by custom; this idleness has made her class diseased in both body and mind (1.1.18-30). Idleness means that what gets wasted in this culture is not just tangible commodities but time, which Charles regards as precious (1.2.118-21). The idleness of this culture is both physical and moral. In 5.1 Eustace moves from 'sloth and ignorance' to 'the aire of action,/ And knowledge of my selfe' (70-73). The remedy to the physical and moral indolence of this society is inner strenuousness, acting on the intellectual and moral insight one has.

Charles's intensity of will and intellectual vitality are represented as the antidote to the idleness and surrender to custom encouraged by political and social institutions, the justice and administration practised by

his father and the court politics his brother is part of. Heroic assertion is seen as redemptive, an escape from Brisac's insistence on 'worldly businessse' that turns a gentleman into 'a flat dull peece of flegme' and from the mediocre world of courtly politics where chivalry exists only in masques while reality prohibits assertiveness (4.1.39-41). Although Charles's excessive emphasis on the imagination gets teased at the beginning of the play (1.2.145-46, 1.2.198), the rationality of his father and the court is shown to distort reality more than his imaginative approach (5.1.1-29). Angellina and Eustace learn from Charles that disobedience can be a virtue when it comes to serving unjust social or political authority, a conclusion reflected in Lilly's refusal to sleep with her master in the subplot. Angellina progresses from the predictability and jerkiness of a puppet to individuality and maturity. Her father is certain that she will be 'tractable' (1.2.256). She starts with 'it is your pleasure I should make him mine,/ And't has been still my duty to observe you' (3.1.42-43) and ends up with 'y'are old and dimme Sir,/ And th' shadow of the earth ecclips'd your judgement' (3.5.207-208). Eustace tells his father that his duty will take any form he pleases (1.2.214-15); but obedience is associated with venality rather than political virtue. The courtiers offer their service and obedience to those who have wealth (1.2.229-31). The negative impact of social and political authorities which encourage conformity can be seen in Lewis's remark that one of Eustace's advantages is that he is a proper gentleman with courtly and affable behaviour and therefore his daughter will be able

to manipulate him as she pleases (3.1.5-15). The submissiveness that Eustace would show his wife is also his response to court politics.

Eustace and his mates are used as a scapegoat that drives home the superiority of gentry pride over court submissiveness; the appropriate political response for a gentleman is an autonomous conscience, which learning creates and fighting expresses. The social and political world of the play leaves little room for heroic assertion and initiative; the courtiers have lost their ability to think and act independently (4.1.18-23). They have lost it because the court's culture demands unquestioning obedience and forbids anger, in return for offices (4.1.38-41). The importance attached to the virtues of chastity, piety and valour constitutes a critique of court practices. The qualities which Charles possesses are specifically described as country values (4.1.36-37). In its search for a more sophisticated gentility, the court has discovered the perverse: atheism is identified with a more advanced moral understanding (5.1.14-15). The divide seen in the play between court values and those of the country, associated with university culture, has been termed by Kearney as court and country humanism; the second outlook was dominant at the universities and stressed the values of restraint and holiness rather than display and sexual prowess and adopted Christ as a model.² For every virtue Charles has, the courtiers have its diametrical opposite. He is a

maid, as Angellina is, not a courtier, 'apt to take fire at every beautiful face,/ That onely serves his will and wantonnesse' (4.3.81-82).

The play associates gentility with the active, forceful man who can resist authority if needed and leaves the stamp of his personality on his environment instead of being shaped by it; this worship of the personality is central to the tradition of chivalry and justifies the association of Charles with knight-errants and the reformed Eustace with the renowned figures of chivalric romances. Gentility is a special quality of will. Those who lack this quality of will, this 'fire' are repeatedly associated with references to empty symbolisms. For Eustace's friends, the symbols of chivalry are myths and forms to be used for entertaining themselves. They decide to be knight-errants for Eustace's wedding masque (2.2.46-51), but this abuse of the symbols of chivalry results in a reassertion of its existence. When Charles suddenly enters and disrupts the wedding preparations in 3.5, he becomes one of Cowsy's 'wandring Knights, that light here on a sudden' (2.2.51). After Charles has eloped with Angellina, Egremont comes in and asks if the masque will start, but Eustace replies that it has already been performed, underlining the association between Charles and knighthood, the past of gentility and the present (3.5.219); knight-errants do exist, after all, if in a modern version. Charles is not chivalric in the sense that he is about to set off on adventures like those of Amadis de Gaul; but the play has a heroic conception of gentility and it does suggest that ideals of

gentility with a flavour of the good old times can still have an edifying influence, a moral value. This is in accordance with the play's attempt to delineate a model of education for the gentry which instils in the young gentleman the quality of will which has always distinguished his rank. Now that he can fight, Eustace carries in his person the same mystique as the gentry before him (5.1.245-51). He becomes associated with Oliver, Roland and Amadis of Gaul (5.1.245, 5.2.64). The seventeenth-century gentleman should possess the accomplishments that were necessary for his more distant predecessors, if not for their usefulness in everyday life, at least for their moral value. The good courtier is 'a fighting Courtier' (5.1.235), in other words one who has preserved the traditional marks of gentry identity and does not hesitate to antagonize authority in order to defend them. As in The Nice Valour and The Queen of Corinth, good gentry make good courtiers.

It is the ability to act, to become angry and to disobey authority, if needed, that gives gentility substance. This quality of will which a gentleman should have is described as 'fire' (1.2.279-83, 3.5.40). Those who lack it are not men but, as Brisac tells Eustace and his friends, 'shapes, shadowes, and the signes of men'; they lack 'metall', 'heat' and 'spirit' (4.1.1-9). They are 'gawdy glow-wormes carrying seeming fire,/ Yet have no heat within ye' (4.1.33-34). 'Nobility and patience' do not mix (4.3.209). A gentleman should have fire but Eustace and his friends are

cold (4.3.201-202). Charles has 'spirit' and 'will', which Eustace and his friends lack; they are 'gilded Flies, nothing but shew in ye'; a man without spirit is only a 'signe of man' (4.3.140-56).

The anachronistic attraction of knight-errantry is a response to the fact that heroic virtues are obsolete in the political and social environment of The Elder Brother; the reason the courtiers have stopped fighting for honour is because 'what's growne common is no more regarded' (5.1.35). The practice is not peculiar to the play. During the 1620s, the earls of Arundel and Essex and their supporters subsidized books and plays which stressed the more archaic aspects of honour - blood, lineage and valour, as a defence against the inflation of honours.³ This was also the period when, according to Barton, Jonson and his contemporaries were seized with nostalgia for the golden age of Elizabeth.⁴ Hinting at the past could be used to point to the faults of the present. The Elder Brother does not just hint at a more glorious past but also nudges at the faults of the present day, which it blames for the decline in the standards of gentry virtue. 'A fighting Courtier' is what Miramont longs for because 'in our age/ Th'are not borne every day' (5.1.235-37).

C. Learning and Gentility

As we have seen, the play values the fighting skills of the past, if not for their practical value, at least for their moral one; and the same argument is used to combat the prejudice against learning. The prejudice against learning stemmed from the belief that a gentleman's proper field was action, not contemplation. Brisac was not alone in condemning 'bookish contemplation' as inappropriate for a gentleman (1.2.123). A contempt for learning, Brauer points out, was not new but was in fact an old aristocratic tradition, originating in the Middle Ages, when the proper province for a knight or nobleman was believed to be the active life, particularly that of a warrior, as opposed to the contemplative life of a scholar. The notion remained despite the Elizabethan respect for learning and the Tudor shift in emphasis from the gentleman as warrior to the gentleman as statesman, which made a degree of learning a requisite to the performance of public duties.⁵ Cleland remarks that some parents, if the tutor had made his pupil apply himself to his book too much, complained that their son did not have the humour of a gentleman (IYNM, p.32); he also notes that ignorance was even thought by many an essential mark of a nobleman (p.134). The educational imperative of the day was 'a mixture of ideality and practicality',⁶ and the contradiction was reflected in members of the gentry like Brisac who sent their sons off to the university to receive fine

education and then expected them to occupy themselves by taking care of the family's tenants, cattle and crop.

It is because learning has a moral value that it is unacceptable that Brisac is a 'monstrous peece of ignorance in office' (2.1.102); this also explains Miramont's argument that merely having a faith in learning is a positive thing (2.1.51-53, 5.2.70-71). A gentleman should have more knowledge than his clerk because learning provides moral superiority and therefore legitimizes authority. The inculcation of manners, Wildeblood points out, depends a great deal on the example of those in authority, like rulers and parents.⁷ In the play it is clear that those in authority, the court, judges and parents, have failed to educate their society. Their authority has therefore lost its legitimate basis. When Brisac is caught trying to seduce Lilly, he exclaims 'are ye my Judges?' (4.4.163). The roles have become inverted because Brisac has been caught in a compromising situation.

Similarly, the court has failed in its mission to educate the young gentlemen. Ideally, the court should be an academy of courage and wisdom, teaching and practising noble undertakings (5.1.64-68). In practice, the court does not even achieve the frivolous educational aims that Brisac has set for his younger son. The play's rejection of the court's tastes and aesthetics constitutes a critique of the court's image of its mission. The masque celebrates the court's educational role but in the play

it is inverted by Charles who, as we have seen, appropriates the chivalric tradition to the gentry as its legitimate inheritors; and we are also reminded that the masque does not tell truths (2.2.44-45). Behind the play lies the humanist idea that learning in the literae humaniores imparted that peculiar wisdom and judgement needed in the conduct of public affairs.⁸ Different views of what learning and judgement are circulate in the play. According to Brisac, learning can be equated with prosperity (1.2.124-25); and 'understanding' is something that this society has no use for (3.3.49-52). For the cook, Andrew's learning is of no use if it cannot prevent Brisac from seducing his wife (2.3.58-62). For Charles, learning is a political and moral, not just a practical, weapon and a description of the commonwealth of bees is a political metaphor, not a way of making honey; he is interested in the industry of the bees, their knowledge, decorum, order and obedience to the king (1.2.134-42). Scene 2.1 contains the dispute between Brisac and Miramont as to which brother is 'a fine Gentleman'. According to Miramont, Eustace lacks the understanding and knowledge that make one a gentleman; ignorance is incompatible with high status (2.1.64-72). For Brisac, understanding is the ability to manage worldly affairs and therefore Eustace is the fine gentleman (2.1.80-84). This is followed by the courtiers' debate on what constitutes learning in Act 2, Scene 2. Cowsy identifies learning with practical political skills (15-20) and accomplishments like dancing (42-43); but as shown through Brisac, proper public conduct requires the moral education that only learning can provide. Riding, singing

and dancing are accomplishments but not learning because they do not impart inner wisdom. The play does not reject the active life; although it emphasizes the moral value of learning, there is no celebration of learning per se. What it does reject is Brissac's very restricted view of it; the active life does not simply include managing 'worldly business', cultivating land and breeding oxen (1.2.121-29). Charles's view of the contemplative life of learning undergoes a similar transformation; at the beginning of the play, Charles's learning is represented as a mass of diseased idealism without practical value (1.2.32-35, 184-90) but at the end of the play it is defined as a study of man and manners (3.5.63-64).

D. Language, Action and Power

The faith in learning is part of a general emphasis in the play on matters of knowledge, understanding and judgement as related to power. Language, the expression of one's judgement and knowledge, is power and takes on aggressive roles in the play; it can make an heir a pauper, a groom a cuckold, or a virgin a whore. Notaries who, like Brisac, are servants to the law and justice, take advantage of dissension and, through words, can do more harm than an army (3.1.17-21). Brisac is afraid that he will become 'discourse for Clownes and Tapsters' (4.4.150). Charles disdains to fight with a coward like Eustace; instead, he will talk him dead (4.3.172). The language of his friends had charmed Eustace into sloth and ignorance (5.1.70-71); and the 'musicall Magicke' of Charles's tongue enchanted and seduced Angellina (5.1.166).

Language is power but it can also be deceptive. The opening scene broaches the issue of how far we can rely on language to draw conclusions about others. When Charles and Eustace first appear on the stage, the difference in their dispositions is constructed as one of linguistic style (1.2.88-94). Angellina has never met Charles and Eustace but she knows them 'by publique fame' (1.1.70). People and their dispositions can be

known through language (1.1.69-73). Lewis also relies on his daughter's reputation to help Brisac form an opinion of her (1.2.78-82).

Social power depends on the ability to manipulate different kinds of discourse. One kind is the legal language used by notaries; another is the language of nature, which includes the inherent drive for sex, money and power; yet another is that of learning. Decorum depends on the ability to harmonize different levels of discourse. Brisac is particularly adept at violating linguistic decorum by mixing up different levels of discourse. In 3.2, although the world conspires to vex him, Brisac insists on securing some 'spritefull mirth' for himself to dispel his melancholy; what happens around him is really unimportant and he does not hesitate to mingle serious matters with light ones. At one moment Brisac talks to Andrew about disinheriting his son and the next to the cook, giving advice on the sauces. Finally, he turns to Lilly and promises to be available the next day at twelve o'clock. How close different kinds of discourse are is perhaps suggested by the blending of the natural language of food with that of thought or the reverse (1.1.132-33, 1.2.11-28, 1.2.113, 2.3, 2.4.1-3, 3.5.65-66).

In 4.4 Brisac betrays his enslavement to the language of nature; he is described as an 'old lecherous Goate in authority' (4.4.9); he is no longer the 'reverend Idoll' of law he was (2.1.162). Like his father, Eustace confuses the language of courtship with that of nature. He is popular

because he is believed to be 'a man compleat in Courtship' (1.1.76) but the women he courts are 'she Calves' wooed for lust (2.1.31); they are not the quasi-divine object from which inspiration can be drawn. Brisac is motivated by animal impulses in his private life but in his public duties he is a slave to custom and formality. A lack of decorum reduces man to animal but too much ceremony suggests a lack of feeling (4.3.42). An intelligent use of language consists in achieving a balance between our appetites and social rituals which involve artificiality; one should become neither a lecherous goat, nor a reverend idol. It also depends on the ability to employ the appropriate discourse for each situation and to balance different kinds of discourse, legal, natural, social, without emphasizing one at the expense of the other. Angellina is capable of harmonizing spontaneous feeling with the legal reality of the contract (3.5.179-81). She can deal with both the legal aspects of marriage and the language of love, and later on with the physical aspects of love. At the end of the play Lewis becomes enslaved to legal language and insists on legal proceedings which will ruin his daughter's happiness, requiring legal revenge for what he considers to be an insult to his honour. Thus, he attempts to turn honour into an inflexible legal system, privileging the legal language above reason (5.2.58-60). Reducing morality and honour to neat legalistic formulas privileges language over empirical evidence and truth. A dishonour is simply a '*Damnum reparabile*' (5.1.5); legal language can be used to sanitize experience even when it is morally revolting.

The play abounds in semiological imagery suggesting the emptiness of conventional definitions of gentility. The language of the play contrasts report with fact, language and action, externals with reality in order to delineate the complex links between judgement, language and power. The conceptual apparatus of the court is shown to consist in signs only, with the gentry giving life to the symbolisms. Eustace and his friends are 'no men but Masquers,/ Shapes, shadowes, and the signes of men, Court bubbles' (4.1.1-2). Touched on the inside, Eustace's fashionable clothes 'smell of Copper' (3.5.151). The courtier possesses only 'the outside of a pretty Gentleman' but his 'inside is but barren' (3.5.184-85). He has the signs of gentility but not the substance, just as a masque is no substitute for true chivalry. Charles teaches Eustace that 'the peace and credit of a man within' should be preferred to 'a gawdy outside' (5.1.191-93); Eustace is 'a peece of ginger-bread,/ Gilt over to please foolish girles and puppets' (2.1.85-86). He and his friends are 'flegmaticke dull carcasses' (4.3.220). The same is true of Brisac who is 'a flat dull peece of flegme, shap'd like a man,/ A reverend Idoll in a peece of arras' (2.1.161-62).

The disparity between signifier and signified in the physical presence of the gentleman-courtier is also reflected in the meaninglessness of courtly language. Words carry no authority and power; Eustace states that he will not use the name of husband and the authority it carries in order to make himself a master of his wife (1.2.220-23). After the

discussion on the meaning of understanding and gentility between Brisac and Miramont has taken place in 2.1, 2.2 exposes the emptiness of understanding as defined in court terms through the emptiness of the language of the court. The culture Eustace is part of has debased language and reduced it to 'nothing but an empty sound' (2.2.31). The sole ambition of a courtier is to evoke admiration, either through his clothes, or through the ability to 'speake strange things, though they speake no truths,/ For then they make things common' (2.2.44-45). After Cowsy has made this remark, Eustace suddenly remembers that his friends must perform a masque the next day, when his wedding takes place (2.3.46); thus, the court's entertainments are associated with those who can 'speake strange things, though they speake no truths'. The court's use of language for flattery debases it because words are words only if 'well plac'd too' (3.5.189); otherwise they are nothing. Eustace has been at court, where he has learnt how to speak 'a tedious peece of nothing' (2.1.28). He is 'made of nothing/ But anticke cloathes and cringes' (3.3.76-77). Eustace has seen 'nothing but the face of Countries' and brought home 'nothing but their empty words' (3.5.73-74). To Egremont, reputation is only a word and 'a kinde of glorious nothing' (5.1.23). The emptiness and vapidness of courtly language underlines the focus of court culture on externals and its lack of cultivation of the inner life; the courtier 'lets the serious part of life runne by/ As thin neglected sand' (4.3.83-84). Charles has an inner life and this

gives him a dignity the other characters lack, even at the beginning of the play when his learning is represented as too theoretical.

Although the play suggests the power of language, it also emphasizes its deceptiveness. Angellina realizes that reputation has been deceptive (3.5.61) and finds that the physical presence becomes the only reliable index to Charles's consciousness. Words cannot replace facts (4.1.67-68) and they cannot guarantee someone's 'integrity and truth' (4.1.64-68). As the night scene suggests, unless supported by actions, words cannot be relied upon to communicate the truth. Andrew finds that he needs the physical evidence of witnesses in order to support his claims (4.4.130-34). For words to be reliable, they have to be backed by actions and the gentleman must similarly support his contemplative virtues with active ones. The language of the court is meaningless because the courtiers are unable to support it with actions. Egremont asks Charles not to kill them by telling him that they only came to talk (4.3.177). The problem of Eustace and his friends is that they 'grow lame in your hearts when you should execute' (4.3.183). When Charles meets Angellina he studies how to be a man; before what man was was only the subject of his debates (3.5.38-39). When Eustace becomes a man, his speech becomes sharper (5.1.194-95); and he despises 'lip-salve' (5.1.276). Self-knowledge can be found in action (5.1.70-73).

In conclusion, The Elder Brother establishes the moral relevance of fighting skills and learning to the special quality of will that gentility is. As in Bonduca, The Nice Valour and The Queen of Corinth, gentility is associated with an autonomous conscience which is entitled to antagonize social or political authorities. The social currencies of learning and fighting are shown to be immune to the attempts of corrupt authorities to replace them with financial currencies. Learning and fighting are necessary to each other because, although language is shown to be power, it is meaningless if unsupported by actions and cannot therefore be relied on to communicate the truth. Action gives meaning to both words and gentility; without it, words are empty sounds and the gentleman only the 'signe of man' (4.3.155). In The Nice Valour and The Humorous Lieutenant the emphasis of the court on obedience and the outward man results in self-division. In The Elder Brother and The Noble Gentleman it results in the emptying of the inward self, as suggested by the use of 'nothing' to refer to aspiring courtiers in both plays.

As in The Knight of Malta, the man of traditional loyalties, the fighter and not the courtier is the most desirable model of gentility. In both plays the emphasis on the inward nature of status aims to invalidate the court's ideal of gentility with its emphasis on display.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Noble Gentleman (1623-26)¹: Theatre of the Absurd

A. Selfhood in the Play

The Noble Gentleman explores the relationship between social identity and image, inwardness and the performative nature of gentility. The separation of form and identity, being and seeming, honours and inwardness results in absurdity because what gives meaning to status is awareness. The most obvious connection of the play with the modern theatre is the emphasis on the emptiness of the characters and the consequent impossibility of knowing; no one can ever know anything because words are unreliable and identity is a void.

The opening scene establishes the theme of knowing and believing through several references (1.1.13, 15, 19, 20). Marine is urged by Cleremont, his country cousin, to look into himself and know the truth (1.1.22-24). To Marine, knowing means being known (1.1.20, 1.1.48); to the cousin, knowing involves inward knowledge, not in the sense of a mystical awareness but knowing one's place (1.1.22-26). Typically for this play, comedy in the opening scene is generated through the exposure of the characters' lack of self-knowledge (1.1.52-53). Knowing is also invoked by Madam Marine who urges her husband to know the place he lives in

and behave accordingly (1.1.127-28). References to truth, knowing and believing continue to underline the absence or inversion of these in the play (2.2.230-31, 3.1.1, 3.3.48-49). The evidence of the senses is deceptive and further complicates the pursuit of truth. To convince Cleremont of the truth of his announcement that Marine has become a duke, Jaques invokes his senses: he saw him 'great and mighty' and heard everyone wish good health and fortune to the duke (3.1.3-5). False judgements of others are related to a lack of self-knowledge: Jaques states that he is 'so sure as I know my selfe for *Jaques*' (3.1.7). To know nothing is the worst accusation one can make and associated with those who are low on the social scale (1.4.7). Status involves knowledge; a courtier is 'he that knows all' but they 'understand just nothing' (3.1.36-40). The phrase is spoken after they have heard that Marine has become a duke and under the impression that they have now been enlightened, a typical example of the games The Noble Gentleman plays with truth and reality. They will now be called to knowledge with the new social positions they will acquire (3.1.41-42). When the country cousin becomes converted to Marine's point of view, Marine embraces him as 'an understanding Gentleman' (4.4.81). Social status involves knowledge, but the reassurance of enlightenment is always illusory for Marine and his circle.

The difficulty of recognizing one's proper social role results in difficulties of recognition further afield. Not only social identity, but categories like gender, truth and logic are also disturbed or inverted. The

first slips of logic occur in the opening scene where the spiritual language on court life is constantly frustrated by more down-to-earth references to the actual lifestyle of these characters, who define court service in terms of the paraphernalia of an elevated social position in town. From the Roman statues and the 'faire heaven, in a frosty night' (1.1.64, 1.1.78), we move on to 'Velvets, Tiffinies, Jewels, Pearls,/ A Coach, an Usher, and her two Lacquies' (1.1.86-87). Inversion of logic occurs in 1.1.101-102 when Marine asks his cousin to confirm that the life he leads tastes of 'Noblenesse' after two counts and a learned doctor have just arrived to see his wife. Cleremont does not appear to be convinced, but when himself faced with the option of allowing his wife to kiss another man for the sake of her husband's office, he is willing to surrender to the absurdity of honour through dishonour. In this world of inverted values, one must be glad when one's wife is kissed by another man (4.4.115-54). The scene shows the initiation of the country figures, who had previously served as a gauge for the absurdity of Marine's lifestyle, into the absurdity and inverted logic of town life (4.4.85-95). Corruption here is a mark of respectability, and Longavile's pride in his status as a whoremaster in the subplot is part of the same context of inversion and absurdity (1.2.11-16).

The inversion of logic includes gender roles. The lack of self-knowledge is seen in a lack of awareness of one's social position but also extends to an inability to live up to the expectations of one's gender. The cousin urges Marine to leave the base subjection to his wife and 'let her

know' that he is her husband (1.1.107-109). By Act 2, Scene 1, it has become evident that the confusion of social identity is followed by sexual ambivalence. Marine states that he knows that women were created for men, and that his wife will know what she should wish; her desires will no longer lead him against his will (2.1.65-72). After his wife has converted him to her point of view, Marine thinks that he now knows himself (2.1.163-64). Throughout the play, Marine claims that he knows what he has to do (2.2.116-17), although he clearly has no awareness of the sexual and social roles appropriate for him. The balance of power is inverted in gender roles and Madam Marine wears the breeches (2.2.236-37); Longaville describes her as a masculine Amazon (4.2.1-2). The first thing a man has to surrender for the sake of the town and the possibility of court advancement is his dominance over his wife (4.4.85-95). The category of truth is similarly disturbed. Nothing can be known to be true and knowledge is ignorance, or the reverse. Jaques has not 'trespassed in ignorance' when he addresses Marine as usual (2.2.207); he has unwittingly addressed him in accordance with his true status.

The absence of selfhood is underlined by several references to the necessity for Marine to be himself or to know himself, literal at first and later ironical or ominous. 'Now you speak like your selfe, and know like him,/ That meanes to be man' (1.1.172-73), Madam Marine tells her husband after he has been persuaded to sell his land. Marine is genuinely urged by his cousin to be 'more friend to your selfe' in the opening scene

(1.1.189); but when Marine refuses to see the king after he has become a duke, Madam Marine's servant's approving comment that 'this was like your selfe' (2.2.151) carries sinister implications. Scene 2.2, as we shall see later, also leaves us with doubts as to Marine's ability to ever look 'like to your selfe' (40). Women are pleasant creatures, Marine realises, 'when once a man begins to know himselfe' (2.1.164). Shattillion restores social order with his sword; his sword has taught the king's enemies 'to know themselves' (5.1.331). The lack of self-knowledge is related to the absence of a central core in characters like Marine who take on the shape of their social fantasies.

This absence of the inner life is dramatized in the Theatre of the Absurd of Ionesco and Genet, where identity is reduced to the external trappings of the persona. Ionesco has described his petit bourgeois as 'a manipulated man, a man of slogans, who no longer thinks for himself, but repeats the truths that others have imposed upon him, ready-made and therefore lifeless'.² In The Bald Prima Donna the essential emptiness of characters fully described by their social roles results in vapid conversations full of clichés and contradictions in the demonstration of feelings. This puppet-like jerkiness Marine shares with Ionesco's characters. His arguments are never his own (1.1.27). After reciting commonplace arguments on court life, Marine returns 'to my selfe againe' (1.1.73); but the banality of his language has already suggested his lack of a personal consciousness. His thoughts are invariably the result of

manipulation. Madam Marine urges him to experience certain feelings and have the right thoughts (1.1.147-48). His wife speaks, and he executes (1.1.164-65). He even needs to be reminded by her that he has land in the country (1.1.166-67). The lack of selfhood is related to a loss of autonomy and individual judgement; Marine is 'a puppy' and cannot see his fall (1.1.203). The lack of insight is related to physical eyesight. Shattillion 'can see,/ And can beware' (1.3.29-30); but Marine is not wary enough (1.1.28, 188). Although Jaques believes that Marine will recover his eyesight and see his danger (1.4.33), Marine's moments of (in)sight are due to the manipulation of others:

I see my folly,

Packe up my stuffe, I will away this morne,

Haste-haste.

(2.1.53-55)

When Marine tries to assert his will against his wife's domineering personality, Madam Marine asks him who has been with him (2.1.92-93). Again, his claim that he can now 'perceive all' (2.1.101) and 'see all' (2.1.110) turns out to be an illusion.

The lack of a central core, of an independent self, is seen not only in Marine's borrowed language but also in the plot involving Longavile and his nightly raids on faceless women in the streets. In describing his Smiths and Martins, Ionesco points out that in an impersonal world, people can only be someone else, they are interchangeable.³ In The Noble

Gentleman, Longavile's women, who can be transmuted into duchesses by the male imagination (1.2.72-75), match the emptiness of characters who can adopt any social shape in the main plot. The play, however, is not concerned so much with the absence of inwardness in the lower characters but rather with the dislocation of public forms and inwardness. Marine does not dramatize the half-comic, half-tragic lack of inner life in Ionesco's petit-bourgeois who is crushed under the 'pressure of the impersonal world of slogans' in a world where everything is done collectively.⁴ The absence of an inner life, which inner life can be found only in the disturbed consciousness of Shattillion, is a social phenomenon rather than a tragic specification of the human condition. As we shall see in the next section, the ability to protect one's central core of consciousness against the pressures of an omniscient and ubiquitous public world becomes a mark of social distinction.

The emptiness of identity in Ionesco results in a disturbance of the order of time, suggested by the contradictory chimes of the clock in The Bald Prima Donna. To characters who are interchangeable, time is immaterial; if there is no potential for development, then moments of time also become interchangeable, and Ionesco's play appropriately ends where it began. Similarly, in The Noble Gentleman, which also allows Marine to carry on as before, the distortion of social identity is paralleled by a thwarting of our sense of time. The characters seek instant pleasure, instant honour, instant stimulation. Indeed, things in the play happen 'in

hast', 'presently', 'in speed', 'very shortly'; the references to speed are numerous and pervasive and a performance of the play would have to convey this sense of urgency.⁵ Meaning can be found in the structure of time and the stability of identity but in the play the everyday actions that create this sense of continuity and stability have been superseded by the fashionable activities of the town. There is none of the comfortable repetitiveness of clearly delineated class and sexual roles which is described as one of the features of country living (2.2.12-42). In coming to town, Marine has destroyed the order that makes existence meaningful and has replaced a life of actuality with a life of illusion; before, he slept with his wife, now he only dreams of her (2.1.19-20).

Although both The Noble Gentleman and The Bald Prima Donna employ a disturbed framework of time in order to chart the adventures of inward truth, Ionesco's play is more pessimistic and does not hint at an order beyond that of the drama; what you see on stage is what you get in reality, and the characters flaunt their awareness of their being exactly the same as the audience. In The Noble Gentleman we get the promise that order, which relies on hierarchy, authority and time, will be restored after this temporary dislocation. The current time framework may be disturbed, but Shattillion reminds us of the time to come, which will resolve the atmosphere of fears and uncertainties. Shattillion feels that 'the time is dangerous' (1.3.11). He is 'tyed to silence, yet a day/ May come, and soone to perfect all these doubts' (3.2.111-12). Many more will open their

mouths when the time comes (3.2.139-41). Changes in identity are accompanied by alterations to time (3.3.44-46). The restoration of order in the play is related to the restoration of the framework of time and social distinctions; upstarts brave those with true rights of birth but the time will come when Marine will be as condemned as Shattillion (3.4.83-86). Shattillion refers to the present 'age' in which statesmen do not look into the innocent and unadorned truth; he is true but no one pays attention to him (5.1.254-58). Shattillion's apocalyptic statements place the action within a framework that reaches beyond the restricted world of the play. On the other side, the attempts the country figures make to give a universal significance to their actions always fail. In the opening scene it sounds as if there is a macrocosmic significance to court living as this is conceived by Marine; but the Edenic terms in which he describes it are later countered by references to the more down-to-earth realities of Marine's lifestyle in town (1.1.86-87). Marine's departure from the court is an omen that will be followed by a great event (2.2.74-76); and Jaques feels that he is destined by fate for greatness (3.1.56-60). Marine's cousin will come to the court when time calls him (4.1.13), although, as we have seen, Shattillion in the subplot constantly reminds us that the framework of time is disturbed and will later be restored to exclude the upstarts. Bewford also reminds us of the insignificance of this world (5.1.186-93), the claims of which to macrocosmic or historical relevance are used to form a comic version of

dramatic irony, especially when Marine insists on comparing himself to the stabbed Caesar (5.1.195-96).

B. Display versus Secrecy

Living in town is, above all, public living. Early in the play, Madam Marine reminds her husband that they must not be 'seen' to fall (1.1.142); they must not be 'common, jaded to the eyes/ Of groomes, and pages, chamber-maides, and garders' (1.1.149-50). Madam Marine's comment suggests the emphasis on display and the public life, which is at the other end of the spectrum from the obsession with secrecy and the need to protect the self from the obtrusive public gaze seen in Shattillion. The two extremes are interrelated and embodied in Longavile and Bewford. Longavile has an obsession with display and takes pleasure in displaying his vices, he dares be 'known and seen' (1.2.11-16), whereas Bewford is secretive (1.2.25-37); he is afraid of people's gossip, which can result in a loss of reputation inappropriate for a gentleman (1.2.40-48). The emphasis on christenings, marriages, tilting matches, masques (2.1.183-6), suggests that life is experienced as appearances rather than content; it is reduced to spectacle and the 'news' and 'intelligence' that Madam Marine requires from her servant who has just come back from town because 'the towne was never empty of some novelty' (1.2.83-85). The pleasures of town living are visual, in accordance with a society that revels in display (2.1.180-89). Madam Marine takes pleasure in making her husband's folly known to the world (2.1.211-12). Longavile takes pleasure in uncovering Bewford, master of

secrecy (4.5.33-37). The overwhelming pervasiveness of public living can be seen in the constant surveillance of the most intimate activities; things are constantly reported, dissension is sown and gossip goes on all the time (2.2.53, 56, 66-71, 3.3.34-35); citizens enjoy staring (3.3.10-11). Madam Marine's maid has even informed Longaville that her master has not slept with his wife for the past two months (3.4.26-28).

The obsession with news, information and display results in a need to protect privacy and inwardness. The emphasis on display in the main plot is matched by an atmosphere of paranoia and secrecy in the subplot. Trapped in the constant surveillance of his environment, Shattillion finds that his self, his inwardness needs to be protected and his madness does just that. Dissimulation can be found on all levels. In the world of the sane, too, conversations begin or end with an injunction to secrecy (1.1.181, 1.2.17-19, 37, 2.2.94). Shattillion thinks that all those who come near him have a purpose to betray him (1.2.90-93, 1.3.26-27, 1.3.75); he suspects that they have sent a woman to make him open up his thoughts and betray himself (1.3.80-85). This observation in the Shattillion plot comes after we have witnessed Marine's manipulation by his wife in 1.1. Shattillion's mistrust of women would be the appropriate emotion for Marine to have; but Marine lacks inwardness and all emotions are displaced onto the secondary plot. Shattillion's Love wishes to protect him 'from the broad eyes of people,/ And wonder of the streets' (3.2.125-26). Again, the observation comes just after we have heard the descriptions of the intricate

performances Madam Marine and her friends prepare for Marine (3.2.1-24). Love wishes to protect Shattillion from the public gaze but Madam Marine takes pleasure in displaying her husband's foolishness to the world.

- The connection between the two opposing poles of an obsession with secrecy and revelling in display can also be seen in Genet's The Balcony, where the revelling in display creates a counter-need for doors to be 'properly shut' (Scene 1, p.2, Scene 2, p.9).⁶ The House of Illusions is not just a brothel but a place where clients come to indulge in role-playing combined with fantasies of power. The morality or lack of it in the roles is immaterial; what matters is the fact that they provide an opportunity to revel in display, irrespective of their intrinsic meaning. Carmen flatters herself in being one of Irma's best whores; she glories in the word as if it were a title, quite distinct from the actual function of being a whore (Scene 6, p.32). In The Noble Gentleman, the detachment of function from role in the main plot can also be seen in the Longaville and Bewford plot, where Longaville takes pride in being a whoremaster and repeats the word three times in six lines with great relish (1.2.11-16). In both plays roles are detached from
- functions, i.e. from their meaning; and absurdity is the lack of meaning.
- These experiments with the separation of form and identity, being and seeming, link The Noble Gentleman to The Balcony. Although no real honours are at stake as a result of Marine's ambitious thoughts, all three plots enact stories of the disturbance caused by the confusion of truth and lie, by the separation of forms and substance. Shattillion's comment that

the creation of a duke cannot stand if his right of birth is not suitable (3.2.130-32) comes after the announcement of Marine's title; Shattillion, by contrast with Marine, has his right by his noble birth (3.2.138). Like Marine, Genet's bishop believes that a function is different from a mode of being. To him, being a bishop is a mode of being, appearance only, and he prefers to dispense with the actual function of being a bishop (Scene 1, p.5). The crucial difference between The Balcony and The Noble Gentleman is that in Genet the image and the function are antagonistic. Not only can they be separated, but they *should* be separated because in solitude 'theatre and appearance keep their purity: the ceremony remains intact'; the illusory perfection of the image is more valued, less vulgar than 'the mud-soiled reality' (Scene 6, p.30). Every function is reduced to its props; to Carmen, marriage means masquerade (Scene 6, p.39). Instead of the function glorifying the image, it is rather the image glorifying the function. The policeman's name can act in his place (Scene 6, p.47); and the image of Chantal, a former prostitute, has an inspiring effect on the idealists fighting for the revolution (Scene 7, p.54, Scene 8, p.66, Scene 10, p.73), which is nothing but a game of pictures.

Both plays, then, explore artificiality and imposture and their relation to the self but reach different conclusions. In Genet's play when one dresses up, one does not only put on a role but also the feelings and thoughts that go with it. It is possible to enter into the skin, the soul, the mind of a bishop as long as one has the right attire. One can be

metamorphosed through clothes (Scene 9); and a good photographer can produce the definitive image, the archetype (Scene 12, p.75). Genet has described his play as 'the glorification of the Image and the Reflection'.⁷ The Noble Gentleman, on the other hand, highlights the absurdity of status that does not come from within. In 3.2 the conspirators stage Marine's display of his status as if it were an intricate theatrical performance (19-24, 31-41, 52-53, 71-74); they take advantage of Marine's tendency to treat status as pure self-representation, 'the greatnesse of my pomp, and of my place' (3.4.145). Marine's role-playing is awkward and draws attention to the fact that it is just that; Marine often forgets that he is a duke and reverts to speaking as husband (3.4.22-24); and he constantly has to remind his servant of the correct way of addressing him (5.1.9-15). True, in Genet customers also remind each other of 'script' lines (Scene 2, p.8) and the stage instructions mount bishops, judges, etc on tragedians' buskins so that when these are removed they look more like ordinary mortals; but there the ending does vindicate social power to be pure appearance. In The Noble Gentleman the self is 'nothing'; the image cannot fill up the emptiness of the self - it exposes it all the more.

Scene 2.2 underlines this impossibility of the separation of image and inwardness, despite Marine's confidence in the previous scene that his wife's changing into country clothes is sufficient for a change of identity (2.1.110-14). There, Marine reaches a point, if on his cousin's instigation, when he decides that he wishes to reaffirm the values he inherited from his

father. However, after Marine has changed into full country outfit, Jaques realizes that it now seems impossible to retreat: 'But yet me thinkes your worship does not looke/ Right like a countrey Gentleman' (2.2.9-10). Suddenly, Marine's plans of taking pleasant walks in the woods and his lady feeding the animals, looking to her laundry and dairy and supervising her maids sound absurd and old-fashioned rather than picturesque. Marine cannot look 'right' in any outfit, of court or country, because the clothes do not correspond to an identity, a core self. Transformation accomplished, Jaques states that Marine now looks 'like to your selfe, a man of meanes and credit' like his ancestors (2.2.40); but Marine can never look quite like himself because his self is a void. In 2.2 he quickly undergoes a second transformation, from country gentleman into courtly duke. The disturbed time framework of the play where everything happens too fast is often related to the fast metamorphoses that take place on stage (2.1.53-55, 2.1.190, 2.1.194, 2.2.43, 2.2.59, 3.1.75, 3.4.12). His cousin also lives under the illusion that having new clothes made for himself and his wife will enable them to live up to the requirements of their newly-acquired status (4.1.1-10). In accordance with his belief, when Marine is disgraced from his honours, Cleremont wishes to turn his wife back into a country maid and exclaims

Are these the honours of this place? *Antony*

Help me to take her gowne off quickly.

(5.1.173-74)

The play reveals its unwillingness, not its inability, as Butler argues,⁸ to resolve the debate between the thrift of the country and the wastefulness of the court. The play does not use the country as it was often seen by contemporaries, a stereotyped panacea for the evils of the court but rather places court and country on a par by showing them to be different experiences that have both been emptied; to Marine and Cleremont they represent styles rather than ways of living.

The country characters may adopt roles, but these cannot make up for the lack of identity; they are empty inside and are appropriately described in terms of 'nothing'. The word reverberates through the play (1.2.85, 1.3.14-18) and usually refers to the country characters who 'know nothing' (1.4.7). When Marine's departure from the court is discussed among the nobility and gentry, they have 'nothing' in their mouths but this (2.2.69). When the king is told about Marine's departure, he says nothing (2.2.111). The country characters 'understand just nothing'; being wise is 'nothing' (3.1.39-43). Jaques wishes to be 'a Duke/ Or nothing' (3.1.86-87). Marine decides that Shattillion's title is 'nothing' (3.4.138); Jaques can gather 'nothing' from Shattillion's face (4.3.54). When Marine is disgraced from his honours and asks Jaques if he ever heard words of treason from him, Jaques replies that he knows nothing (5.1.168).

Like the characters of Ionesco and Genet, Marine can be peeled and peeled but there is no central core to be found. His wife confirms the

emptiness of Marine's selfhood by reassuring us that he cannot be hurt because 'the man was never of such deepnesse' (3.2.39). Marine gets so carried away with his roles because he lacks a central core and is able to adopt all shapes effortlessly. He is so true to his knightly role that he looks 'as though he were/ One of the plot to gull himselfe' (2.2.154-55). His wife acknowledges that he gives a good performance (3.2.71-74). When others fool Marine, 'hee'l have his finger as deep in't as the best' (5.1.230). A great deal of the comedy comes from the ease with which people move from one discourse or role into another. When Longaville declares Marine a lord, supposedly on the king's orders, Marine instantly switches to courtly language, praising his king and with false modesty thanking him because he has 'heapt/ Honours on me without desert' (2.2.146-47). Jaques and Cleremont switch to a different role as easily as Marine; like their role model, they are in constant flux and completely defined by the roles they adopt each time. When Gentleman 4 kneels and asks Marine's pardon, he, inimitably, replies (raising him)

Sir you have mercy, and withall my hand.

From henceforth let me call you one of mine.

(3.3.53-54)

However, what is really disturbing about Marine is that he does not stop at the language and manners of the nobility; he can even fake the ethics. He does not dress his self in a role; he completely denies his self. He already

displays his generosity by stating that he will show his love to the citizens (3.3.38-40). He is idiosyncratic and unpredictable, as true greatness is: 'I shall see your service/ And your deservings, when you least expect' (3.4.34-35). He even knows what it feels like to be a courtier: he asks Jaques to tell his tenants that he would like to see them but 'the waight at Court/ Lyes heavy on my shoulders' (39-40). Cleremont states that Marine has the courtly language perfect (1.1.27), but even if we take his comment seriously, the issue, as in the scene where Marine switches to his father's dress code, is one of authenticity, not correctness. The forms Marine employs - in speech and attire - are ridiculous to us because we know them to have no substance.

In his imagination, Marine is able to separate substance and form, and the focus on ceremony without its content deprives his conduct of all seriousness. Marine is not interested in political power, only in the insignia of status: the 'greatnesse of my pomp' (3.4.145), the role and the ritual. Status is to him self-representation: displaying his state to his country tenants. Ironically, after Marine has been disgraced from his honours, he asserts that gentility does not depend on offices but on blood (5.1.238-39). At last, he, too, discovers some form of inward gentility; it is enough to him that 'I am a Prince as great within my thoughts/ As when the whole state did adorn my person' (5.1.380-81). Yet even here he attempts to separate the outward symbolism of status from inwardness. The play does not

suggest that appearances are always unreliable but that their separation from inwardness results in absurdity. Shattillion's madness goes against the belief that there should be a correspondence between noble externals and inwardness (1.2.94-95). With Shattillion's return to sanity, form and inner truth are again reunited. Identity comes from fulfilling certain obligations, performing certain actions, not from acting. The true gentleman acquires his sense of identity not by acting as if he were one but by serving the king (5.1.325-32).

By contrast with Genet, fantasies do not acquire a reality of their own, apart from within the disturbed subjectivities of Marine and Longavile. Marine's comparison of himself to Caesar is comic because, among other reasons, truly great men do not stand back to make historical comparisons. There is something unconscious in true greatness, which is always to be observed from the outside; it has objective reality. As in The Nice Valour, it is suggested that the social sanction of status protects from the prevalence of subjectivism. At the end of the play, Marine's greatness becomes self-reflective and therefore absurd; he has a title but no one must know. Like Bewford, who slept with duchesses in his imagination, Marine will be a prince in his thoughts. As in Genet, the performative nature of social distinctions is linked to impersonal sexual love like that found in prostitution. Bewford advises Longavile to seize women in the night so that no man, not even the woman herself, will know who has slept with her (1.2.65-71). To Longavile's complaint that he will not be able to see the

woman's face, Bewford replies that women's faces do not matter because 'the night allows her equall with a Dutches,/ Imagination doth all;' (1.2.73-74); in The Noble Gentleman the imaginary has the same effect as the real (a fake pregnancy has the same effect as a real one, Marine is just as happy with his imaginary honours) but reality does not collapse into fantasy as it does in The Balcony. Bewford rejects women of all social classes, both ladies and city dames for the sake of faceless sex (1.2.41-75), but reality is vindicated when he is eventually forced to marry Maria, a woman who has previously admitted him to be 'a proper Gentleman, and far/ Above my meanes to looke at' (4.2.16-17). In sexual pleasure as well as gentility 'imagination doth all' but only within the protagonists' mind - Maria does not turn into a duchess. Unlike Genet's play, the characters never become involved in the real political game; when they are confronted with actual political realities, they can only play at being dukes. At the end of the play Marine sounds like a child dealing out roles in pretend-play (5.1.441-43). Marine's lack of involvement in the real political world is also evidenced in his inability to make accurate judgements. Those who are shallow inevitably think of others' titles as light and insubstantial; self-knowledge is linked to the ability to make accurate judgements of others' status. Marine describes Shattillion's title as carrying 'some shew of truth', but light when examined well (3.4.112-14); but this is a projection of his own status.

In this atmosphere of confused, inverted or concealed identity, recognition is impossible; Shattillion no longer knows his Love (1.2.100) and is only able to recognize her at the end of the play after order has been restored. In the main plot characters always express themselves with great certainty as to the information they communicate, their feelings of friendship and who they are (1.1.155, 2.2.86, 2.2.230-31, 3.1.7); in the Shattillion plot the exactly opposite climate prevails. The impossibility of trust and the lack of a stable identity result in a failure of communication in 4.3 and difficulties in recognition. In accordance with the general inversion of gender in the play, Shattillion passes Jaques, who is disguised as a woman, for a yeoman of the guard sent to entrap his words and his life (4.3.157-58). In addition to the confusion of social identity and gender, it is hard to distinguish between one's friends and enemies. Madam Marine's servant speaks to Marine 'as I am your friend' (2.2.62) and makes false professions of friendship and truth (2.2.86, 98). In an inverted world, only the mad Shattillion uses words in a meaningful way. In 4.3 Shattillion decides to protect Jaques because he does not wish to send a friend to his death (49-52); and the word 'freind' resounds through the scene, whispered as Shattillion tries to save Jaques's life and also used when Shattillion talks to his Love (4.3.58, 69, 85, 87, 88, 93, 95, 103, 143, 148, 149). The impossibility of trust and friendship is also underlined (4.3.85-86, 105, 143-44). Problems with identity occur again in 4.5, where Jaques states that his life was saved by a 'noble Gentleman' who, if he had his

right acknowledged, would have a good throne, too (4.5.71-75). Longaville, unaware that Shattillion has just saved Jaques from a danger that was purely the figment of his demented imagination, takes 'noble Gentleman' to refer to Marine and suggests that they should both go to the duke and give thanks for the deliverance (4.5.75-77). Although the title of the play is usually taken to be an ironical reference to Marine, it in fact relates to the confusion of truth and illusion in the play.

The confusion of reality and illusion and the related omnipotence of language also connect The Noble Gentleman with the Theatre of the Absurd. The opening scene establishes a recurrent theme: the reduction of the self to the mere name of a function and the power of words. To Marine, a courtier is a name that commands wonder and duty (1.1.7-8); if Marine leaves the court he will be far from 'the name of noble' (2.1.181). The court is a place of 'promises, and protestations' (1.1.25) where language shapes reality, in a similar way to that in Genet's play where words determine intrinsic value: men who pay for sex are visitors, not clients (Scene 6, p.23) and the House of Illusions is never called a brothel (Scene 6, p.28). Madam Marine tells her husband that he should not imagine the base and low thought that he has no money left (1.1.124-25); such words are inappropriate for a man of worth (1.1.126). She also refers to those who have 'the name of money' (1.1.137). Words have power and can tie up even Sampson; they empower women but emasculate men (1.1.139-40).

Madam Marine creates the impression that her words have power: 'you shall be great to morrow, I have said it' (1.1.175).

A faith in words usually turns out to be misguided and Marine, who trusts them, also has a tendency to trust appearances. Marine believes that his wife's judgement sees something for his good and he trusts her language (2.1.43-48); but Jaques advises his master to 'think better of her words' because his wife manipulates him for her sensual ends (2.1.49-51). When Marine decides that he does not wish to see the king, Longavile tells him that he will bear his 'Knightly words' to the king (2.2.133). Those who trust words are those whose empty self is completely identified with its roles. With his words, Marine speaks his heart (3.3.32-33); and the cousin is impressed by Longavile's words (4.4.10). Marine, in addressing his cousin, claims that he knows the word he spoke and the person (4.4.57). When Marine becomes a duke, in accordance with the separation of functions and titles, it is his name that becomes mighty (4.4.82). Scene 5.1 further underlines the detachment of authority and titles. Marine expects that the mere mention of his new name will strike a terror through the heart of his tenants, although his stage presence would rather disprove his claim (1-4). He also insists that Jaques should refer to his house by its name, i.e. as House of Burgundy (9-15). When his wife comes and refuses to conform to his decision of going to the country, he invokes the authority which the name of husband gives him (45-51); but it is obvious that the mere name has never given Marine any authority in his relationship with his wife. In the

same scene, Cleremont decides that now that Marine will be away, he will have an opportunity to make his humble name as strong (128-32).

By contrast, Shattillion is suspicious of words and prefers to judge people by their function. Love asks Shattillion if he knows her; he replies that he does, but refuses to speak her name because what matters is that he knows her and her business (1.3.44-47). Shattillion believes in functions, not roles, and therefore mistrusts words, which are part of role-playing. Words hide rather than reveal the truth and Shattillion is constantly trying to read between the lines; he examines well the words he speaks (3.2.135-36). He feels that everyone is trying to entrap his words and lay hold upon his life (4.3.8-15, 4.3.157-58, 5.1.282); he even resolves to stay in his house so that no one will be able to entrap his words (4.3.155-65). Words are traps and cannot be relied upon to impart the inner life or communicate the truth, which results in paranoia. Even a cross is an unreliable symbol. Shattillion specifies that his cross

Is nothing but a crosse, a very crosse,
 Plaine without spell or witch-craft, search it,
 You may suspect, and well, there's poyson in't,
 Powder, or wild-fire, but 'tis nothing so.

(1.3.15-18)

Marine's honours begin with words in the opening scene (1.1.175) and end with words in the final scene. He is divested of his honours with the words 'thou art now no more, so says the King' (5.1.162). Marine states

that he has never uttered a word of treason (5.1.166-67); and he also tells Bewford to leave these 'rebellious words' (5.1.210) because to him one is what one's words are. The appeals of Marine and Cleremont to the authority and power of names and words in the early part of the final scene which I quoted earlier serve to bring into focus the contrast between their point of view and that of Shattillion, who mistrusts language. In the latter part of 5.1, the main plot and the Shattillion plot are brought together. Truth is disentangled from falsehood and here the measure of reality is a physical, not a verbal one. Shattillion wishes to fight because he has a good cause and fights for a true prince; but Jaques refuses to support Marine's cause and Shattillion orders Marine to descend the steps he usurped against the king and state (293-99). In this way, the resolution of Shattillion's political fantasy also serves as a way of resolving ambiguities or inversions in social identity in the main plot. Actions must replace words before order can be reinstated. After order has been restored, Shattillion does not allow Marine to utter a syllable (300-301); and he requires a token of reconciliation from the king in order to believe that he is no longer angry with him (337-38). Shattillion wishes to fight for the king in order to prove that what is reported of him is not true (290-91). He fights the king's battles and thrusts his body into dangers for his cause (325-29); so, after all, the ambiguity in the title of the play is resolved and he emerges as the true noble gentleman who can fight a duel and defend his king. Marine refuses to undergo the physical test of exposing his naked body to the

lions, who will not touch the truly noble (392-400).

In conclusion, The Noble Gentleman is a skilful combination of three plots, all of which deal with the separation between forms and inwardness and its absurdity and show that status is an inherent quality, not one that can be constructed through outward representation. Social and political power is not pure appearance. As in the other plays which constitute this thesis, there is great emphasis on the relationship between status and the inner life, especially self-knowledge. In this play, the external pressures which threaten the inner life are those of public living, with its emphasis on externals and display. The emptying of selfhood is related to a loss of autonomy and individual judgement. An independent core in the self becomes a sign of social distinction. We have already seen this in Bonduca, The Nice Valour and The Elder Brother. As in The Knight of Malta and The Humorous Lieutenant, the performative nature of status is associated with faceless sexuality; and the order of words and outward representation which reigns supreme in the opening scene is in the end replaced by the body, which becomes a token of truth, as in The Knight of Malta, The Nice Valour, The Elder Brother and The Little French Lawyer. Distinctions rely on actions, not words. Like La Writ in The Little French Lawyer, Marine repeats the truths that others have imposed on him; those who are slaves to public perceptions of themselves lack self-knowledge. At the same time, status which lacks social sanction is absurd; The Noble

Gentleman, The Nice Valour and The Little French Lawyer share a concern with the risks of subjectivism.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Scornful Lady (c.1608-10)¹: Christian Language, Fashionable Manners

A. Christian Charity and Gentle Prodigality

In The Scornful Lady the playwright's aims to please the audience and to instruct it pull in opposite directions and the ambivalence can be seen in both play and criticism. Finkelpearl has seen the main figure of the play, the gallant Young Loveless as being proposed by Fletcher as the standard of behaviour that the gallants at the Blackfriars would willingly accept.² The Scornful Lady portrays the gallant with none of the 'admixture of criticism' that can be found in plays like Monsieur Thomas and The Wild-Goose Chase.³ At the same time, however, he acknowledges that the play has 'the generalized quality of a didactic morality play'⁴ and adds that Young Loveless's nonchalance is 'unamiable'.⁵ Such contradictions only show how well the comic and the moralistic elements of the play have been fused. If Young Loveless is 'a relaxed amoralist with a good eye for the main chance'⁶, why is his argumentation invested with religious imagery? The fact that Finkelpearl regards the play as a version of city comedy, concerned with the economic, social and sexual problems of young gentry⁷ cannot account for many other aspects of the play. There may be reasons why vice is described in the language of spiritual redemption and virtue in

terms of folly. The didactic quality of a morality play which Finkelpearl detects does not simply lie in the play's plot but in the language which undermines the assumptions of comedy. Conversely, comedy is used to dilute any harsh judgements that we might pass on the play's protagonists. One could sum up The Scornful Lady by saying that it employs most of the conventions of a morality play but not entirely black or white characters.

The play does draw a distinction between conduct that is ethically acceptable and conduct that brings success in a worldly society and secures the conquest of female hearts. What gives the impression that this is a play vindicating amorality through its ending is the fact that standards other than those of amorality or of nature, which are explicitly voiced by the protagonists, are subtly represented through the action or inscribed on the terms used. Savil, who at first objects to his new master's lifestyle, is a pagan who must show his penitence through drink and by acting as a bawd (2.2.132-35). This is a blatant inversion of Christian values, but at other points the distinction between Young Loveless's creed and a Christian ethic of communality becomes blurred thanks to the language used. I think that the ambivalence of the play is due to the fact that the ending asserts the values of the language rather than of the characters who have been using it. Without this distinction, we run the risk of idealizing Young Loveless and bypassing the language of the play.

Strictly speaking, the deception practised by Young Loveless is not different from that of the usurer, the aptly named Morecraft. Nevertheless, Young Loveless describes his supporting a batch of social dregs as a religious mission. When Savil tells him that these men are not fit company for his master's brother, Young Loveless replies that Savil is a 'Pagan steward', whom he will convert (1.2.55-57). Those that do not accept the principles of mirth and wine will be excommunicated from their company (1.2.104-105). Food and home are transitory and show men to be mere mortals (1.2.113-15). On a less benevolent note, Young Loveless justifies his indifference to his brother's death by explaining that 'these transitory toys' do not trouble him (2.2.89). Young Loveless tells Savil to kneel because he has been an infidel and a pagan; from now on he will be 'drunke and penitent' (2.2.133). According to the captain, land is dirt, but money makes men eternal (2.3.106). Yet money can also lead to damnation. Morecraft is associated with the devil. The captain remarks that Morecraft's brain is the devil's diet to a usurer's head (3.2.66-67) and Savil also associates the usurer with the devil (3.2.80). The captain urges Morecraft to 'open to me those infernall gates,/ Whence none of thy evill angels passe againe' (3.2.15-16). The play on the word angel, also found in other parts of the play (2.3.62), is typical of the subtle allusion to a standard other than the worldly one which Young Loveless endorses.

Such language suggests that the contrast between the usurer and Young Loveless is not a crude one between avarice and prodigality. The language circulating in the play obscures distinctions between virtue and vice. Prodigality, wine and endless merriment are elevated to the status of a Christian ethic that can help save one's soul, not just an Epicureanism that can secure worldly pleasure. The trouble is that we are never quite certain whether such linguistic echoes are taken seriously by those who employ them, or are put into their mouths by the dramatist as a hint at a wider, inclusive order that is at once Christian and comic.⁸ Young Loveless seems to be willing to embrace any theory that will justify his actions. Even nature is evoked in this desperate attempt to justify reckless spending. Young Loveless hopes to 'live upon others, as others have lived upon mee' (1.1.176-77) and try nature's liberality (1.1.187-88). His creed sounds like a romantic return to a primeval state of society which precludes competition; but it has more sinister aspects, as trying nature's liberality will mean stealing purses and keeping whores. Soon Young Loveless switches to the Christian language that supports what seems to be an adequate moral system. Young Loveless, drinking and merriment are repeatedly associated (1.2.102-103, 2.2.5, 3.2.103-104, 3.2.128). Those who do not drink wine, thus refusing comic intoxication, must become penitent, perhaps because drinking wine and being 'merry' in the play is described as an inclusive ethic without which companionship cannot exist. Young Loveless urges

Morecraft to drink because without drink 'ther's no society' (3.2.46). Morecraft seals his conversion by asking for beer (5.4.108).

Being 'merry' is not the same as having a valid morality; but it can create an atmosphere of euphoria and goodwill in which morality can thrive. Morecraft is prone to fits of anger (3.2.59-60), and so is the Lady (5.2.13-14); Elder Loveless seals his denial of love by becoming angry (4.1.329). Despite Young Loveless's moral imperfections, it is the usurer who is presented as the threat to the social ideal of the play. His strength is not just wealth but deception, and both seem to threaten traditional conceptions of status and the economic stability which supports these. Morecraft is associated with threatening economic changes, the enclosures (2.3.20-21) and the loss of the paternalistic ethos (2.3.126-28). Dynes relates the official and popular anxiety about usury to a view of economic activity as an opportunity for greed and self-advancement; the usurer became 'a symbol of the worst dangers at the crossroads of economics and society, specifically because the practice of usury violated the community ideal of Christian charity and mutual dependence'.⁹ Young Loveless is far from being the heir to the paternalism of his ancestors, but he becomes the spokesman, though not the representative, for an ethos of social obligations associated with gentility and which the usurer threatens. The ability to spend is connected with the ability to love. A denial of love is equated with avarice; when Elder Loveless decides to stop courting the

Lady, he declares that from now on he will restrain his usual liberality (4.1.213).

As in Middleton and Jonson, the wit turns out to be the fool; but with an added twist, the fool also emerges as the wit. Young Loveless's conduct spans the full range of folly, from unacceptable social behaviour, to ignorance, to Christian generosity. He is a fool, but the overlapping of folly and wisdom gives the play an Erasmian touch. Morecraft advises the widow to be wise (2.3.49-50), by which he means that she should marry for money rather than love. He is afraid of trusting the widow in case he proves a coxcomb (2.3.145-49). When Roger loved Abigail, he was 'a Christian foole' (4.1.54); he will now be wiser (4.1.60). Elder Loveless decides that he will no longer let his love for the Lady make him a coxcomb; he has become wise (4.1.105-110). Abigail states that 'women are most fooles, when they thinke th'are wisest' (4.1.384). Love is associated with foolishness (4.1.39-40). Young Loveless has more folly than he has vice, and his naïveté mutes the moral issues. The exaggeration with which he is presented, especially in his indifference to his brother's death, has the effect of precluding rather than encouraging serious criticism. That is not to say that we have to see him either as comic or as disgusting. As Parker remarks on Middleton's monsters, their grotesqueness can be 'funny or horrible, and often there is a hint of both'.¹⁰

By the standards of a morality play, Young Loveless is evil; by the standards of comedy, he is foolish.

The interpenetration of the comic and Christian orders is thus fraught with ironies. The play starts out in a way reminiscent of a parable: Elder Loveless pretends that he is going on a journey, leaving the charge of his house and the guardianship of his younger brother to his steward Savil. When he returns disguised and announces his death, he finds his servant corrupted and his brother rejoicing at the news. What follows is not a punishment of sinners but an ending which manipulates the spirit of the parable to serve an upper-class ethic. Doubtless, reconciliation is part of the meaning of the prodigal son parable; but here the rhetoric of reconciliation is used to mask contradictions between what the characters are doing and what the language encourages us to believe they are doing. Elder Loveless keeps the land, Young Loveless retains the cash, and the only one to be 'converted' is the usurer who, in a fit of what looks like Christian penitence, decides to follow the prodigal's example and liberally hands out money to the servants, while the so far most dissolute character in the play switches to the solemn declaration

I am glad of your conversion Master *Moorcraft*:

Y'are in a faire course, praye pursue it still.

(5.3.57-58)

The undercurrent of Christian discourse which we examined earlier is continually thwarted, partly because those who employ it do so for their own dubious ends; and partly because the ending of the play is only made possible by the subtle obscuring of distinctions between youthful prodigality, gentlemanly liberality, and Christian charity which has taken place prior to Morecraft's conversion. The usurer does not realize that Christian charity and communal sharing and the gentlemanly nonchalance in spending are two entirely distinct codes. So far the gallant and his notorious retinue have been preaching charity to the usurer as a path to the salvation of his soul; but Morecraft is converted because this will grant him membership in the world of the upper class where affluence is faster and effortless - to him charity is a status symbol. Dramatically, the usurer's conversion is ironical and keeps the ethics of the play in the right perspective; his conversion includes the purchase of the appurtenances of high status (5.3.64-66). One can see the conversion as a moralistic conclusion to a parable, the usurer who chooses salvation instead of wealth; or as a further and ironical assertion of worldliness, charity as a means to riches and status. I would suggest that the perspective of the morality play and of comedy are reconciled by showing that worldly prosperity and Christian salvation are not incompatible. Morecraft has all

along been encouraged to believe that by practising hospitality and wasting money he will also save his soul (3.2.50-53).

The ending of the play aims to confirm rather than deny the concept of natural gentility. It seems that only those who aspire to membership in a class need to conform to its ethics in a strict way - they need to prove themselves, whereas the young gentleman has been allowed to play with social limits. Morecraft pays in order to share a fantasy. He becomes a prodigal in order to be able to say 'come, we are all gallants now, Ile keepe thee company' (5.3.59). Conspicuous waste, like drinking, becomes the easy way of securing membership in a group. However, Morecraft can imitate only one isolated quality of the gentle ethic; he can never become a gallant. Another mechanism that protects those who are connected with the upper class, whether by inheritance or by bought title, is a sense of solidarity. The upper class is presented as a group; its feeling is strongly collectivized. Morecraft is constantly reminded of his isolation, social and spiritual (3.2.169). This may explain why Young Loveless seeks a knighthood so devoutly. A title, any title, is a kind of social capital which can be used to obtain other rewards, wealth and a wife, usually these two combined, irrespective of one's worth as an individual. In this light, Young Loveless's is not 'a meere paper honour', as the usurer calls it (2.3.138).

This may also explain why the widow seems to value Young Loveless's knighthood so highly despite his obvious lack of gentility. She

goes on to marry him, ignoring Morecraft's warning that Young Loveless will waste her money (2.3.3-4) and prefers a penniless man with a title, a 'poore distressed younger brother' (3.2.178) to a social outcast with money. At the end of the play, Morecraft realizes that this social capital is more valuable than the one he possesses. That it can be so easily confused with Christian charity proves how successfully the ideology of the gallant has been operating throughout the play in its blending of the vocabulary of gentlemanly prodigality and Christian charity. The way to save one's soul is the same as the way to obtain social and financial success. Morecraft declares that he will give up usury and follow the prodigal's example (5.3.51-56); but what matters is not the conversion of the usurer but why it takes place. The usurer follows Young Loveless's example as 'a constant meanes to riches' (5.3.55-56), not because communal property bonds represent social ties, as in Wit without Money.

The play remains socially conservative to the end. Morecraft's views are seen as subversive because the usurer insists on social distinctions being based on economic status. At the end of the play, people are still described in social, not economic terms; affluence is not identified with status. Status always leads to cash, but cash does not necessarily lead to status. Naturally, this thesis is invested with the social romanticism appropriate for comedy. Young Loveless courts the widow by carefully reminding her that blood and beauty should be valued above profit

(3.2.106-110). The play is pragmatic in acknowledging that gentility is often defined by manners and externals but not pragmatic enough to remove the ideal of gentility as inherent and natural altogether. Young Loveless is allowed to provide glimpses of a better nature near the end of the play, which justifies a feeble connection between merit and birth. As we have already seen, Morecraft is differentiated from the gentry in spiritual, not just in social terms. In addition to spiritual salvation and a title, Morecraft also lacks another social capital, beauty, which Young Loveless possesses in abundance. In courting the widow, Young Loveless reminds her of the upper-class emphasis on generosity, noble birth and beauty, as contrasted with the cunning and physically disgusting broker (3.2.83-124). All kinds of capital in the play are payable on presentation.

B. Prodigality versus Constancy

In the opening scene it is suggested that the tasks the two brothers have to perform are parallel; one has to mollify the usurer's heart, the other to persuade the Lady to let him stay (7-11). Discord seems to be at the core of the world of the play. Elder Loveless tells the Lady that he has come to her house in order to kindle love and forgiveness in her barren heart (1.1.101-102); but to the Lady, any concession on her side would mean branding herself as 'a woman, a weake one, wildly overborne with passions' (1.1.106-107). Like prodigality, her predilection for 'things unexpected' (5.2.15) is a denial of stability, order and constancy. The virtues of Elder Loveless are 'constancy and obedience' (1.1.76); he is 'a constant and a liberall lover' (1.1.226-27). These virtues the Lady refuses to reward. Constancy is associated with liberality, whereas avarice and prodigality are the symptoms of an inconstant, unstable world without family or other ties. Like usury, the Lady's stipulation that Elder Loveless travels to prove his love, suggests an inability to trust, a constant need to prove oneself (5.2.176-77). Like the usurer, who flares up easily, the Lady has 'a strange peevishnes' and 'anger' in her (5.2.13-14). The fact that she is against marriage (1.1.285-86) further underlines her refusal to succumb to the par excellence ritual of socialization; Morecraft's return to the fold is

signalled by his willingness to become liberal in order to find a suitable match.

The disharmony caused by a lack of trust and generosity is evident in the breakdown of family ties. Young Loveless does not care about his brother's supposed death; and prefers to refer to his companions as his family (2.3.62), in which he is imitated by the poet (2.3.108-109). The denial of stability is evidenced in the wild behaviour of Young Loveless and the denial of the importance of family ties. If family origins do not matter, then people become social chameleons adopting the class of their clothes. Young Loveless refuses to maintain a proper household (1.2.131) on which stability and sanity depend. Savil's family is the first thing to suffer as a result of his refusal to support Young Loveless's lifestyle (3.2.42-44, 5.3.1-20). The noise, drinking, swearing and whoring have made him almost mad (3.2.143-46). Stability is threatened by money. Not all forms of affluence are threatening in the play. The widow has 'wealth' (2.3.35) and the Lady has land; but the usurer has 'money' (2.3.53-57). It is instant, easy money that threatens the status quo, not wealth that has been slowly accumulated, perhaps cleansed by being passed on from generation to generation. This ability of money to transform instantly makes it at once so threatening and so fascinating. Money can change status instantly: 'off with your husks, Ile skin you all in sattin' (2.2.170-71), Young Loveless announces to his

'Noble Compeeres'. Unlike land and inherited wealth, money obscures rather than establishes social distinctions.

The ambivalence of the play is due to the fact that it endorses the liberation from an ideology associated with the wealthy but socially inferior, while acknowledging that this disruptive attitude could destroy those ties without which it could not exist in the first place. It relies as much on satire as on 'the pleasures of recognition and celebration'.¹¹ Division, degeneration and indecorum are visually represented in the prodigal's entourage. This includes a poet, an inebriate captain, a traveller and a tobacco man. One could argue that these are the bad angels of a morality play, or the Puritan evils of idleness, profaneness and ignorance; but, more importantly, they stand for a set of social customs that were associated with a particular class and age. These men are 'the Morralls of the age, the vertues' (1.2.76). In his pamphlet Counterblaste to Tobacco (1604) James associates smoking with the pursuit of 'delicacie', prodigality and idleness that peace and wealth have brought forth in the gentry, which was the wreck of the Roman empire.¹² In this age, Brathwait complains, hospitality has declined to riot and prodigality (EG, pp. 55-56). The gallant does have all the marks of gentility but in a degenerate form. Young Loveless's retinue is a form of hospitality gone wrong. He refuses to maintain a proper household, but can easily afford to spend several hundred pounds a year for the wine of his retinue (1.2.131-38); as

Morecraft recognizes, the hospitality that the captain advocates makes one not a baron but a 'bare-one' (3.2.56-57). The captain misleadingly refers to prodigality as bounty (2.2.9). It is not only the Christian discourse which is manipulated by the gallant; the ideology of gentility is also distorted by him.

C. Language, Public and Private

The conflict between the public and private spheres and their discourses seems to lie behind the Lady's view of the position of her relationship in the public world. The Lady feels that her relationship to Elder Loveless compromises her independence and her stature among her social circle. Divulging one's private secrets in public results in dishonour, the Lady tells him, a fact which Elder Loveless denies (1.1.125-52). The punishment he receives is very appropriate; moved by the Lady's pretence of swooning as a result of his tirade, he confesses his feelings in the presence of her servants, making a fool of himself before she quickly 'recovers' (4.1). In this way, she drives her point home; that exposing one's feelings in public can only result in a social embarrassment. The Lady and her sister complain that men use their sexual intimacy as a public display of prowess, not as part of a private relationship that needs to be protected from their inquisitive social circle (5.4.70-75). Women feel more threatened by the prying eyes of the public world (5.4.29-33, 50-53). The Lady's sensitivity to the invasion of her private space, in a literal and figurative sense, underlines her belief in the importance of preserving the integrity of the private self while conforming to the dictates of social decorum. She deals with the conflict between the requirements of public and private living by

employing a different discourse in each sphere. She has an affable language for her public persona (1.1.79-80) and an aggressive one for her lover, a disparity which can also be found in Elder Loveless but in the reverse form. The Lady enjoys insulting and humiliating in public the one whom she loves (5.2.1-21), but in the company of her servants she easily discloses her true feelings. Many men are swayed more by the opinion of their chamber servants than those allied by birth to them, not because they love them more but because the servants know their secrets (1.1.213-16).

At the beginning of the play, the Lady uses a language that Elder Loveless has not yet mastered: wit. Her wit has the sense of a sceptical rationality. She insists on the accurate and rational use of words, speaking 'toth' purpose' (1.1.81). The Lady is sceptical of language (1.1.84-85, 1.1.283-84). Her discourse is sharp and formal, by contrast with the linguistic exuberance of her servant, Younglove, and Young Loveless, who are always 'merry' and talkative. She teases Welford by interpreting his words literally (2.1.8-10), rejects the imaginative and eccentric use of language and insists on a correspondence between vows and actions (5.2.187-92). She also mistrusts figurative language and only accepts in her home 'honest meaners, that deliver themselves hastily and plainly' (1.1.84-85). The Lady is aware that figurative language can easily disguise vice. The best example of this is found in Young Loveless and his retinue, who disguise the amorality of their creed by investing it with the language

of salvation and social bonding. Ideally, spending should have the sense of Christian charity or gentlemanly generosity, but the prodigals use the religious imagery in support of their own ideology. Through the Lady, the play warns its audience that the language of those who do not deliver themselves 'hastily and plainely' is unreliable; the language of the prodigals conceals its antisocial implications behind religious imagery. The Lady's sceptical attitude to language is related to her sceptical view of human worth; she does not bestow her favours easily and demands that her lover proves his love first by serving her. By contrast, the widow is easily deceived by language, appearances and titles. She willingly trusts Elder Loveless's fair language (3.2.186-87); and she is also susceptible to the charm of beauty and knighthoods, while the Lady has to affirm her lover's worth before giving herself away.

Different forms of affectation mark the speech habits of the suitors in the play. When Sir Roger decides to try Welford's wit, he finds that he always takes the meaning of words literally (1.1.263-74, 1.1.299-303). Welford, who has a tendency to interpret words literally, also relies too much on appearances; he asks Elder Loveless to guess who he is 'by my outside' (3.1.61). Wit is associated with a mistrust of appearances; hence the inverse analogy between finery and wit (3.1.288-89). On the other side of the spectrum from Welford, Sir Roger is a pedant indulging in figures of speech, extracts from literature and Latin tags; his learning has not helped

him woo Abigail successfully (2.1.93-102). Welford's affectation, Sir Roger's learning and Elder Loveless's chivalric attitude, all fail with the women of the play. They represent different models of speech decorum based on gravity and a literal habit of mind, which is also found in Morecraft. To him, a man who feeds others is not a baron but a 'bare-one', and he refuses to follow up the captain's witticisms (3.2.54-58). Those who reject witty exuberance find their gravity deflated by feminine playfulness and their courtship rejected. However, Elder Loveless finds that wit does not come naturally to him when he is his normal gentlemanly self; he has to dress up like a seaman before he can violate the strict standards of speech decorum that apply in the Lady's house. Love and affectation do not mix, as the subsequent exposure of his trick proves (4.1).

Finkelpearl criticizes the play for its 'vein of coarseness' which he regards as a compliment to the crass vulgarity of the young gallants in the Blackfriars audience.¹³ The Scornful Lady does have a 'vein of coarseness', as evident in its verbal and visual imagery of hunting, filth, food and surfeit but this does not simply serve the purposes of slapstick comedy. The lack of decorum in speech is a symptom of a disorder in fundamental values, which we have already examined. Speech indecorum is only one item on a long list of excesses in the play. Indecorum can be found in the machinations of Elder Loveless, the manipulative language of Young Loveless, the constantly shifting poses of the Lady, Abigail's wanton

language and even women's cosmetics. The Lady punishes Elder Loveless for a breach of decorum, but although her painted face conforms to the requirements of decorum, it hides a mind that lacks true courtesy; propriety is incompatible with affectation and rigidity (4.1.141-47, 4.1.168-80). Despite her arguments to the contrary, the Lady is more concerned with formal decorum than inward truth (1.1.132-38); and as Elder Loveless suggests, she is as much susceptible to passion as everyone is (4.1.168-80). Decorum, as can be seen in women's use of cosmetics, turns women into pictures and emphasizes the public face at the expense of inwardness (4.1.168-80, 5.2.113-14). Women like the Lady may have feelings for their lover, but they prefer to flatter themselves with his suffering; they adopt a scornful attitude because they wish to be thought chaste by everyone, so they ensure that their contempt is known to their social circle. In the meantime, they sleep with men who are inferior to their lover, whose gentility and gentleness they do not reward. The Lady's public conduct is simply an accumulation of uncivil and bestial influences disguised under the civilized facade of a good reputation (4.1.168-80, 5.1.1-20).

Since the social circle of the Lady locates honour in the face, it is appropriate that the theme of deception is represented through the imagery of human appearances. Abigail has trusted her face, which has now been ravaged by time (4.1.9-12). Having obtained his wishes, Welford reassures Martha that what she has done will not show in her face (5.4.32-40). The

disillusioned Elder Loveless decides that women's faces do not seem beautiful to him now (4.1.124, 4.1.141-42). Women are false dice (4.1.360) and their language is inherently deceptive (5.1.86-96). Elder Loveless tells his new prospective wife (Welford disguised) that the ideal woman would be her humble mind joined with the Lady's face (5.2.96-97); the perfect wife who plays no tricks and uses no bad language is only a figment of the male imagination. His new 'bride' claims to use 'no paint, nor any drugs of Arte' (5.2.99); yet everyone remarks on how ugly she looks. Painted faces are unreliable but the deception does enhance their beauty.

The difficulty in fighting against the heady mixture of wine and pleasure is that it can be found everywhere, not just in Young Loveless's household; it thrives even in the Lady's house. It includes the kitchen, the dairy, the laundry, each with their own faction of fornication. The pursuit of pleasure is an inclusive, but also a disruptive ethic; they are all in tribes, like Jews. In the midst of 'these copulations', 'a stranger is kept vertuous', an allusion to Sir Roger (2.1.144-56). Vice is gregarious and pervasive and so is its language. Sir Roger finds it hard to make himself understood; and trying to mend the butler's dissolute ways by preaching to him only leaves him with a broken head. The best response to the indecorum of the world is treating like with like. I would see the ending in this way, not as an unqualified conversion of the other characters to Young Loveless's standards.¹⁴ Elder Loveless wins the Lady when he fights her wit with wit

(5.4.4-8). The Lady likes to do 'things unexpected' (5.2.15), a tendency reflected in her language. She exploits linguistic ambiguity and gives her lover's words an interpretation other than the one he intended (1.1.79-84); her repartee uses the same words that he has previously used (1.1.89-100). In his disguise, Elder Loveless learns how to exploit the ambiguity of others' words to his own ends and masters the unexpected retort typical of the Lady's wit (3.1.42-50, 3.1.66-68). This enables him to tame her with her own methods at the end of the play. Furthermore, Elder Loveless and the widow seem to believe that Morecraft deserves such treatment because it is simply punishing him with his own tactics (3.2.161, 3.2.139-40). Sir Roger attempts to correct the ways of his society without adopting its language and ends up not only with a failure of communication but with a broken head as well. He tames Abigail when he employs the method of witty antithesis and sets off his words against hers (4.1.29-54). The suitors adopt the language and strategies of those who are wild but I would not agree that they are converted to their standards.

The same virtues that ensure survival in social living also secure success on a personal level. If he had been tame, Elder Loveless would then be 'an unfit man for any one to love' (5.2.42). The Lady seems to have internalized the values of her society. Qualities like the assertion of one's will, the ability to dominate and a propensity to wildness seem to be highly valued in the public sphere of men; the captain even describes the lack of

civility as a sign of status (4.2.36-46). Elder Loveless relinquishes his commanding public persona when he is with her. The Lady, however, prefers aggressive wit to the stereotype of feminine weakness and flowery prose. Witty language and autonomous self-expression resist the Petrarchan sublimation of women and empower women who have no other way of defending themselves against male indecorum (4.1.325-26, 5.1.1-3). Elder Loveless realizes that his sophisticated manners have been an impediment rather than an advantage in courting the Lady, who has used him without any consideration for what he is: a man without manners, a carter or a coachman would have already slept with her (4.1.187-91, 5.1.1-20). A lack of witty language is close to a lack of sexual potency; Welford, who is accused by the Lady of being lacking in wit (3.1.288-89) is 'a sattin sute' but no man (3.1.94-95). Since wit becomes the battleground not only of rank but also of gender, outwitting a woman is asserting one's masculinity; the reverse is a failure. The Lady's behaviour provokes Elder Loveless into making an assertion of proper masculinity (4.1.205-208). Her treatment of Elder Loveless is subversive not only of gender but also of class (4.1.324-25, 5.1.1-20). Witty language becomes a standard by which characters are judged, regardless of their social standing or wealth. Welford realizes that the bluntness of Elder Loveless is a more successful method than meandering courtship (3.1.54-55), although the disguised Loveless does not wear Welford's fine clothes. Gentlemen are no longer expected to be knights conforming to Petrarchan rituals. The Lady has no

respect for men who fight duels and sternly reprimands Elder Loveless and Welford who quarrel for her sake (3.1.138-42). Later in the play, when Welford challenges him, the 'reformed' Elder Loveless replies that he dares die, but not for a woman, not because he believes that fighting for a woman demeans her, as the Lady argues, but the reverse. He asks Welford to find a nobler subject for their swords (5.1.40-41). From then on, they rely on wit rather than conventional chivalric practices.

The Lady's wildness and her rejection of conventional courting practices is also related to her insistence on preserving her freedom. The Lady asserts her independence, her right to withhold or grant favours at will, opposing the traditional expectations for feminine gentility. She will make no man 'Master of my businessse' (3.1.134). Elder Loveless pays dearly for daring to boast a favour from her in public. Young Loveless, another 'wild' member of this community, feels that relinquishing his freedom for the sake of socially acceptable standards of behaviour would take away his gentility. Being civil is appropriate only for heathens (4.2.40) and 'grosse Grosers' (4.2.43). Elder Loveless wins the Lady when he adopts her tactics and proves that traditional allegiances can accommodate wildness and wit. The Lady treats marriage and courtship as a threat to her personal freedom and rejects her lover's constancy. Her passion can only exist in the absence of his constancy (5.2.64-72). She marries him despite her sister's warning that this is an inconstant man

(5.2.246–49). In the end, when Elder Loveless proves to her that traditional allegiances can be combined with being 'merry', she surrenders herself. I would not say that the play rejects the 'pretence of conventional morality'¹⁵ but rather that witty language makes conventional morality attractive enough for those who are 'wild'. Plain seriousness is boring to the Lady (1.1.68-78); Welford's finery is the equivalent of the stereotyped language of Elder Loveless which bores the Lady. Sir Roger's learning may not be an instant of indecorous speech, but it is a deviation from the standard that the play endorses, a combination of constancy and wit, masculine decorum and feminine playfulness. The ideal of the play lies in a balance between the two, not in a denial of conventional morality as Finkelpearl argues. The pleasures of a divergence from traditional allegiances are shown to be deceptive and insubstantial; the Lady admits that her behaviour is self-destructive (5.2.1-16, 5.2.64-72).

In conclusion, the dislocation of language in The Scornful Lady is a symptom of disorder in fundamental social values; a mistrust of appearances is accompanied by a mistrust of manipulative language and female externals. As in The Noble Gentleman, the obsession with news, information and display results in a need to protect privacy and inwardness. As a result, dissimulation can be found on all levels and a faith in words usually turns out to be misguided; those who trust appearances also have a tendency to trust words. In both plays those who have a

sceptical attitude to human worth are also aware of the instabilities of meaning. In a disordered world, meaning is negotiable and one has to use language accordingly. Through language the gallants express their sense of confidence in their ability to manipulate a world with false values which is susceptible to deception, where it is possible to construct one's identity through cosmetics, titles, money, clothes and, above all, language. Those who have a stable identity also accept that words have a single, fixed meaning. Yet even the stable, unified self cannot communicate with others without adopting social and linguistic roles; a literal habit of mind makes communication impossible in The Scornful Lady and The Wild-Goose Chase. Meaning can be found in the stability of identity and language; the gallant, however, refuses to accept a fixed correspondence between words and their meanings. The conciliatory ending of The Scornful Lady is made possible by the subtle obscuring of distinctions between youthful prodigality, elite liberality and Christian charity which has taken place prior to Morecraft's conversion. Similarly, in Wit without Money the rhetoric of social bonding of the wit is shown to be interested but the destabilization of meaning also has a positive side to it because it allows language to become the carrier of values that the ending vindicates. A literal habit of mind can be uncharitable; in addition, those who take language at face value also have a tendency to rely too much on appearances. As we shall see in Chapter 10, because meaning is negotiable, social life and sexuality in The Wild-Goose Chase are represented as play, the ability to

manipulate discourses in an environment where people and words are not what they seem. Language is the medium of most kinds of play and both social and sexual domination are associated with the ability to play with the instabilities of meaning.

In The Scornful Lady as well as in the three remaining plays (Wit without Money, The Wild-Goose Chase and The Little French Lawyer) the formal decorum required by society is incompatible with private life, inwardness and even morality. By implication, then, in The Scornful Lady, Wit without Money and The Wild-Goose Chase the violation of linguistic decorum through a witty/playful use of language is the sign of a propriety that is more than skin-deep. By contrast, the emphasis on formal decorum is associated with a flawed theory of civility that locates value in one's face and clothes.

CHAPTER NINE

Wit without Money (c.1614)¹: Gentility and Gender: Masculine Bonding, Feminine Charity

A. 'Title troubles'

One of the concerns frequently voiced in conduct books of the early seventeenth century was that the new generation had no sense of reciprocity in the way they related to their society: 'so manie of our young Nobles deceiue themselues herein, thinking that wee are bound to respect and honour them in all deuotion and service, & that they are not tyed to any reciprocal courtesie' (IYNM, p.171). The complaint is often encountered that gentility has lost its intrinsic value and has become what Leinwand calls 'an external quality'.² A charge moralists frequently levelled at the young gentleman was that his gentility was of the kind that could be worn on one's back rather than a socially significant quality. The former precluded the latter because it was felt that, in Peacham's words, 'no one wholly affected to follow fashions has been useful to the commonwealth' (CG, p.199).

Complaints about the lack of a social conscience in the younger generation are common to all cultures and ages; but for the conduct-book

authors of the time, this signified the decline of an ethic that had so far served as a class marker. This may have been the reason behind the vigorous persistence of the ideal of hospitality despite its decay during this period. Charity, generosity and compassion were the qualities commemorated in the epitaphs of dead noblemen, qualities of which gallants seem to have had little appreciation. Ashley's comment that 'by bounty and beneficence as much as by any other thing ys Honour procured', reflected a social reality.³ The majority of the gentry and nobility wished posterity to know about their hospitality and generosity through their epitaphs.⁴ In the early seventeenth century Sir Ralph Delaval was described by his son as one who 'kept an open, great, and plentiful house for entertainment'.⁵ With the steady flow of gentry into the city, the beginning of the seventeenth century saw the gradual decline of this ethos of social obligations that the country estate had for so long preserved. During his reign James I issued eight proclamations trying to persuade the gentry and nobility to return to the country because by staying in the city 'both th'execution of things incident to their charge is omitted, and Hospitalitie exceedingly decayed, whereby the reliefe of the poorer sort of people is taken away, who had from such Houses much comfort and ease towards their living'. Noblemen and gentlemen had now fallen to 'a more private and delicate course of life' instead of following the example of their ancestors and had forgotten that they were not 'borne for themselves, and

their families alone, but for the publique good and comfort of their Countrey'.⁶

Landed property, then, the hallmark of gentility, was associated with a social ethic which was threatened by the new conditions. The background of the play is not that of the city but of the 'town', which was often used to designate a specifically fashionable part of a city, and particularly of London.⁷ It is within this context of 'fashion', affluence and town living that the play examines the social relevance of gentility. The opening scene establishes precisely this context of social patronage that accompanied land. Valentine's father was a typical country gentleman who practised hospitality but Valentine does not want to become again 'master of these troubles' (1.1.89). Lance reminds Valentine that he has an obligation to support his tenants as they supported him and provided for his expensive town lifestyle (1.1.97-98); but Valentine is not interested in the role of country patron. He enjoys the privileges of his social position but not the responsibility, at least responsibility as conventionally defined. His rejection of the ethic that should pervade the ownership of landed property is treated as an aberration. Valentine's rejection of his land is described as madness (1.1.7, 59, 67, 150), a betrayal of himself (1.1.108) and of everything that is appropriate for his status (1.1.217-18). Valentine accepts the money his friends provide generously, but is not interested in the social and ethical considerations that property is shown to involve. Property is

inextricably linked to people in the play (1.1.106-109). The loyalty of the tenants is not to land only but to the gentry as well (1.1.72-77); but Valentine is not as sentimental as Lance about land, treating it as a financial asset and just that, not a sacred focus of social relationships.

Valentine is a wit, posing as a malcontent who rails against the evils of gentry culture. In the place of gentility as a series of practical duties, Valentine proposes a new, intellectual conception of gentility, 'holding it monstrous, men should feed their bodies,/ And starve their understandings' (1.1.21-22). Free from his ancestors' ambition for material prosperity and status, Valentine claims to be using his leisure for teaching 'a manly love, community to all/ That are deservers' (1.1.190-91). He believes that his service may not be as tangible as that of his ancestors but it is more important. The products to be sold now are wit and pleasure, not rotten wood. His gentlemanly accomplishments, knowledge, understanding, travel, reading, wit, are, he believes, worth money (1.1.181-83). As in The Scornful Lady, various forms of social capital are shown to be more valuable than wealth. Valentine believes that the prevailing gentry ethic lays more emphasis on materialism than understanding and intellectual qualities (1.1.21-22); it is also mercenary and utilitarian. He is worried that people are not interested in your wit, vivacity, enticing manners or even your travelling, but in what you can do for them.

One of the ways in which Valentine breaches the code of his class is by denying, or rather warping, the ethic of reciprocity and gratitude. He resents the idea of social relationships being based upon an exchange. Valentine feels that accepting his uncle's help would be tantamount to begging or stealing a kindness; what he gets from his friends is not forced but 'the meere quallity and poysure of goodnesse' (1.1.179). A true communal ethic means that 'deservers' should not examine how much or what is done for them (1.1.190-92). Valentine demands that his uncle should give him money 'as due unto my merit' without stipulating that he should change his ways in return (3.5.114-17). Francisco feels that it is necessary to give thanks to Martha for her bounty, but Valentine upbraids his brother for his honourable intentions; in a gentleman gratitude indicates a lack of merit:

Hang giving thanks, hast not thou parts deserves it?

It includes to a further will to be beholding,

Beggars can doe no more at doores; if you

Will goe there lies your way.

(4.3.9-12)

A similar opinion is stated by Isabel when she refuses to accept Francisco's thanks (4.4.144-45). Valentine claims to have transformed his

brother into 'a fine Gentleman' (5.2.39) by forcing him to live off seemingly miraculous windfalls. Francisco becomes converted to his brother's style of living, joining Valentine at the end of 4.1 and leaving his dumbfounded uncle alone with Lance to wonder how it all happened; but we are reminded that one should not rely on 'immediate blessings' for too long (4.3.31-36).

The ethic of exchange which Valentine resents so much is not restricted to social relationships but also extends to marriage, which is a way for fallen gentlemen to rise (1.1.23-24). The woman gives her beauty and wealth in exchange for status and more wealth. Valentine is free from the calculating attitude to marriage that the widow and the graduates have (2.2.70-73). When the widow tells him that she has lost her wealth, he still marries her to restore her honour, which has been tarnished by rumours that she has slept with him. For the graduates, marrying a widow is 'to lie with her, and to enjoy her wealth' (2.2.22); all pleasures seem to be subjugated to wealth. For Valentine, wealth is incompatible with love. He fears that a widow will lie with a man's land, not with him (2.2.84). Noble feeling does not mix with 'want or wantonnesse' (4.4.179).

Valentine's virtues have no value in this mercenary environment but they do represent instinct and energy. He refuses to relinquish pleasure for the sake of maintaining his status and wealth. Perhaps his message is that the enjoyment of life should be valued over utilitarianism; to this 'joy of

heart' the widow is converted when she meets him. Her conversion suggests that one cannot actually tell who is useful or worth loving on the crude basis of clothes or a social label, the standards by which people are judged in the play. Judgements based on these are shown to be unreliable. If one insists on being with people for what one can get from them, as the widow does, one takes away the fun and spontaneity of living, and a woman can end up with types like Valentine's sponsors for suitors. Naturally, they do not know how to court a woman; the conversational titillation of the art of courting has been eliminated by a culture which insists that people should get something out of every social transaction. The widow finds that the best courtship comes from someone who is entirely useless by conventional standards; these suggest treating social relationships as a lift to upward mobility or a shortcut to wealth. It is these standards which make her reject Francisco as an unsuitable prospect for her sister despite his intellectual accomplishments.

After Valentine's exposition of the new social ethic in 1.1, the following scene deflates his rhetoric of brotherhood. Valentine is not, in fact, free from the ethic of consumption and materialism with which he charges his class. Valentine has devoured and gulped down his own brother (1.2.38), a comment which echoes that of the previous scene (1.1.54-55). Valentine's ideal of social bonding does not mean that he abdicates his sense of superiority; his ideal requires an enlightened

authority at the top - himself. His friends are 'deservers' so long as they finance his costly fantasies. His ideal is not really for the levelling down of class distinctions but rather an attempt to claim for himself the privileges and impunity of high place. Like his tenants, his friends are important for the services and wealth they provide to him. His uncle does not hesitate to admit that, objectively seen, his behaviour to his friends was a breach of trust (3.3.17-18). He poses as magnanimous and disinterested although his relationship with his friends does not involve a sense of responsibility but is rather regulated by his obsession with mastery. Valentine exudes the confidence of a young man who feels that all the world is before him to be used for his pleasure. This can best be seen in the advice he gives his brother, whom he urges to exploit the credulity of his society (2.4.51-52). He claims to be necessary to his environment as a civilizing influence; his mates owe it to him to support him. His role is to adjudicate status: without him teaching them 'manners and apt carriage' (3.5.6), his friends will lose their status and return 'to their owne deare dunghill breeding' (3.5.29).

Valentine's success is not just due to the pleasure he gives his friends with his witticisms. He is very good at exploiting the contradictions of gentry culture in definitions of gentility.⁸ The ambiguity lies in the fact that theory advises humility and affability and is exemplified by Francisco while, as Valentine is well aware, society in practice endorses individualism, boldness and judgements based on wealth and externals.

Francisco complains that he is not suitable for a great man's service because he is not bold; he is 'a man, and yet he is no man' (2.3.10). He rightly points out that great men reject those they sense to be needy (1.2.42-49). The contradiction is exemplified in the different attitudes of the two sisters. Isabel is impressed by Francisco because 'the sweetnesse of his suffrance sets him off' (1.2.83); but her sister is impressed by Valentine's manly bluntness. At the beginning of the play the widow is shown to be against the selfless ethic endorsed by Valentine and her sister's charitable tactics (2.1.24-26). She finds her sister's pity 'base'; charity depends on who the receiver is (2.1.1-2). According to her, even if Francisco had virtue, virtue is not an inheritance (3.1.68-72). She believes that wealth and gloss matter more than inward gentility, an attitude which is shared by others in the play. Isabel refers to Francisco as 'a well built Gentleman', to which Luce replies 'but poorely thatcht' (1.2.37). She believes that without wealth, there is no substance in man, man becomes an empty signifier:

Hees a begger,

Onely the signe of man, the bush puld downe,

Which showes the house stands emptie.

(2.3.12-14)

Isabel asserts an ideal of correspondence between manners, as expressive of the inward man, and a noble birth: 'he is well bred,/ And cannot be but of a noble linnage' (1.2.80-81). The widow judges Francisco by his clothes, an attribute which Valentine shows to be very mobile. By the end of the play, she has been converted to her sister's viewpoint and judges Valentine without reference to his financial circumstances; he is 'a proper Gentleman' (3.2.199).

The unreliability of judgements based on wealth and externals is further illustrated in Valentine's treatment of dress. He changes clothes several times on stage, which perhaps in performance would have the effect of conveying a sense of the fluidity of such distinctions. Orthodoxy at that time insisted that differences in dress were not merely conventional but 'a reflection of divine order'; quite often in drama, Dollimore adds, metaphysical legitimations of the social order were interrogated and displaced by the recognition that it is custom, not nature or divine law, that arranges things as they are; and that the laws of custom are also the laws of privilege and domination.⁹ Valentine sees established ways of classifying people, like wealth and dress, as obscuring rather than revealing or expressing true gentility. It is not wealth in itself that is treated with a fine irreverence, as Hoy has argued,¹⁰ but the superficial judgements and distinctions based on it and the society that makes them, this 'fine beleeving world' (2.4.52), these 'poore blinde people' (3.2.82) and their

'weake eyes' (3.2.85). Such distinctions may conceal gentility for a while but eventually, perhaps providentially, it will triumph:

Did you ever know desert want? yare fooles,

A little stoope, there may be to allay him,

He would grow too ranke else, a small eclipse,

To shaddow him, but out hee must breake, glowingly

Againe, and with a great luster, looke you Uncle,

Motion, and Majesty.

(4.1.58-63)

Valentine's refusal to accept his uncle's help, even when naked in cold weather, is comic; but it also suggests his insistence on his gentility, on his self-concept of independence and inherent excellence. He does not rely on his clothes to be a gentleman; but having gentility, the symbols and accoutrements of status will spontaneously come to him. Valentine shows that such a thing as a gentle self does exist, even when stripped of the 'ground workes' of gentility, land and wealth (1.1.20), even of the rich clothes that these can buy, as it happens in the play.

As we have seen, Valentine's seemingly noble lecture on brotherhood is flawed because his leadership is not driven by a paternalist

ethos but by his natural need for domination. The latter is expressed in his language. His argument that he wants to teach 'the way of nature' and 'a manly love, community to all/ That are deservers' (1.1.189-91) helps him rationalize his use of wit as a way of exercising power and manipulating others. That is not to say that wit is Valentine's personal quality. The scenes involving the servants suggest that wit is a contagious mood and a pervasive language indigenous to town living; even Shorthose has been affected by its prevalence (2.3.27-33). Language is part of the charms of town living; in 1.2 Isabella and Luce try eavesdropping in order to amuse themselves with others' language (5-7). Valentine, however, has gone beyond witticisms for the sake of amusement to a use of witty language as a source of power but also as a way of surviving in London, which he claims is what many others do. Language seems to have replaced other forms of aggression. Valentine does not believe in duelling (5.2.9-12). Nevertheless, through his railing, the widow gets the impression that he has saved her from a batch of 'unmannerly rude puppies', with himself cast in the role of noble defender. Valentine sees himself as a semi-chivalric hero rather than a parasite; though he is not bound to fight for women, he will defend them (4.5.87-88).

Valentine's indecorous wit is interpreted by the widow as a moral propriety, honesty and spontaneity which rises above considerations of linguistic decorum. Valentine's linguistic improprieties are contrasted with

the decorous, but trivial and insipid, language and manners of other members of the gentry. His comic refusal to conform to the norm is not seen as a symptom of corruption but as proof of a propriety that goes deeper than language; his 'manly handsome bluntnesse' shows him 'honest' and 'a proper Gentleman' (3.2.195-99). Such propriety therefore escapes the sensory limitations of the 'fine beleeving world'. The widow does not love him despite his indecorum but because of it (5.1.38-39). His unconventional wit also reveals a pervasive goodwill which is independent of class or gender. Valentine's wit is repeatedly associated with madness: 'he talkes the best they say, and yet the maddest' (3.4.5). His indifference to property is madness (1.1.150-51). Significantly, however, Francisco's goodness is also associated with madness; when his uncle offers to help him rise from his brother's ruins, he refuses and his uncle calls him a fool (4.1.24-28). Lance and Valentine's uncle find it hard to explain 'this miracle' when Valentine reappears finely clad. These are, as Valentine describes them, 'mad foolish wayes' (4.1.50). His honourable decision to marry the widow is taken in a fit (5.4).

B. Gender, Land and Gentility

Property may not be associated with responsibility for Valentine, but what it does represent is an endorsement of materialism. The opening scene establishes the close connection of women with landed property; and in turn, with materialism (1.1.23-24, 1.1.229). Valentine's rejection of the materialism of his class is described as a manly ethic, as opposed to the effeminate ethic of consumption and display. The traditional upper-class ethic of keeping an open house he regards as unmanly, by contrast with 'more manly uses, Wit and carriage' (1.1.19). Valentine regards women as anti-spiritual, and therefore a risk to the most precious part of man: his understanding and discretion (2.2.33-51). According to Valentine, the ethic of consumption and display, whether it takes the form of hospitality or luxury, is effeminate. For this reason, the prevailing gentry ethic which is, as we have seen, incompatible with an emphasis on intellectual accomplishments, is also effeminate. Female consumerism is even associated with damnation (3.2.77-78). Valentine believes that the fact that he has no wealth but that of his soul protects him from female rapacity (2.2.68-86).

The self-display that takes place in town and the hospitality of the country are both forms of a spectacle that reduces the importance of the

life of the mind. Expensive clothes suggest that a woman does not cultivate the qualities of her mind. The widow, however, claims that she has been more successful than Valentine in living in that society and at the same time remaining detached from it; her clothes do not affect her mind (3.2.82-84). The widow and her sister are not docile brides scrupulously guarding their virginity but sophisticated ladies who possess a variety of intellectual accomplishments and can easily face a battle of wits. The widow is accomplished, not the mindless consumer of goods and services that Valentine initially takes her to be. She is described as an intelligent woman who

...plaies and sings too, dances and discourses,

Comes very neere essaies a pretty poet,

Begins to piddle with Phylosophie,

A subtill Chemicke wench.

(1.2.20-23)

It seems that the widow succeeds in convincing Valentine in 3.2 that life in town is not incompatible with intelligence. His acceptance of women, who are associated with the materialistic aspects of living, the 'glosse, and outside' (5.1.51) is followed by his acceptance of property and its social ethic. Hoy argues that the play treats money with 'a fine irreverence'¹¹ but

Valentine becomes a true gentleman when, near the end of the play, he displays his unwillingness to lose his land. When he decides that he wishes to keep his land, he invokes the ethos of social obligations that he has previously renounced; his tenants will never accept the merchant for their landlord (5.2.72-85).

The rebellion against domestic values and female conspicuous consumption suggests a view of marriage as an endorsement of materialism. Valentine's rejection of marriage is a rejection of the ethics of his own class, the ethics that equates marriage with prosperity. Newman notes that in various kinds of writing in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the sexual and the economic are associated and the talking woman is everywhere equated with an insatiable sexuality that in turn supports her avid consumerism: extravagance and adultery thus become related sins.¹² She cites Epicoene as an example since it is peopled with talkative women whom Jonson portrays as monstrous because they roam the city streets spending breath as well as money.¹³ In Wit without Money the widow's financial, linguistic and sexual powers are associated; she has survived her husband, whose wealth she has inherited. Such prodigious wealth arouses Valentine's suspicion; it can only have a monstrous sexuality as its source. Accordingly, he tells the widow that rumour has it that she killed her husband with her lust (3.2.165-

66). Valentine condemns widows because they substitute financial security and self-display for sexual pleasure (2.2.84).

As a result, Valentine decides that his ideal partner should be silent and poor. An obedient and modest wife is one without wealth (1.1.233-45). He advises his friends to marry a humble maid who will be satisfied with less; luxury is seen as the result of pride (2.2.89-100). His ideal wife should provide a haven from the economic realities of consumption and town living. Valentine feels that there should be difference between the two sexes; men should be aggressive, whereas women should be passive. They should consume, while women should save; men can do what they like, women must conform to a strict code of conduct. These are distinctions which the widow rejects. Valentine divides activities into feminine and masculine ones, excluding women from the competitive and status-conscious world of men; but with women appropriating the traditional accoutrements of high status, Valentine has been forced to create a masculine counter-culture. He rejects the competitive ethic as a reaction to what he sees as the effeminate, emasculating culture of consumption and worldliness. It is therefore misleading to see Valentine as simply a misogynist, as Clark has seen him;¹⁴ his railing is against a social ethic that he believes is exemplified by women, not against women themselves. Scene 3.2 is not simply about the 'hidden assumptions that support misogyny and sexual double standards';¹⁵ the double standards

relate to status as well as sexuality. Because Clark fails to connect considerations of gender with those of status, she argues that the play 'ultimately shows the marriages serving the interests of the men', while acknowledging that the partnership Valentine and the widow evolve is offered as 'a new social model as well as, more conventionally, a solution to Valentine's financial problems'.¹⁶ However, there is a contradiction in arguing that the play is more concerned with the interests of the men because, as we shall see, the new social model that Clark admits emerges at the end of the play is a feminine one.

Valentine's ideal includes only men: 'an understanding man, is more wife to me,/ And of a nobler tie, than all these trinkets' (2.2.47-48). He teaches 'the way of nature', which consists in 'a manly love, community to all/ That are deservers' (1.1.189-91); yet his ideal turns out to include women as well. In 2.4 Francisco wonders who has sent him the bag of money. Lance replies that the money must be from any man 'that has but eyes, and manly understanding/ To finde mens wants, good men are bound to doe so' (2.4.127-28); in fact the gift has been sent by Isabel. Qualities like charity and generosity are shown to be independent of gender. Virtues and vices are the same in men or women; the invalidation of gender distinctions is related to the abolition of class distinctions. The merchant also seems to behave like a gentleman; he does not wish to take advantage of other people's financial hardship (1.1.48-52). Human

behaviour depends on one's qualities of mind and should not be judged on the basis of class or gender. Such distinctions, like those based on wealth and clothes, are shown to be unreliable. The feminine language of charity, which is a different form of Valentine's masculine network of generosity and patronage, pervades the play. Isabel's love for Francisco is described in terms of charity and pity (1.2.85, 2.3.5, 4.4.192-93, 4.4.196, 4.4.200, 5.5.17). Discourses of love and wealth are associated; Isabel sends Francisco 'a whole bagge full of mercy' (2.4.112). It is the feminine ethic of charity rather than Valentine's masculine bonding that is vindicated as the new form of gentry generosity and paternalism.

In 3.2 the widow argues that women are excluded from the masculine system of social distinctions and the insignia of status (69-77)¹⁷ and the tensions inherent in a status-conscious society are projected onto them. According to Valentine, women embody the aggression and selfishness which are the features he sees in the emerging economic reality. He sees the prevailing gentry ethic of competition and exchange as effeminate, but the widow reminds him that this is a masculine code (69-77, 118-22). The masculine ethic is anything but disinterested. Men's concern with status makes them obsessed with others' actions, turning even the simplest ones into something meaningful:

Our very smiles are subject to constructions;

Nay sir, its come to this, we cannot pish,

But tis a favour for some foole or other.

(3.2.112-14)

Gentlemen seem so eagerly to destroy others' reputations that they would not hesitate to aim even at those of their own mothers. Their duplicity and weaknesses are projected onto women; men assume that they have access to women's inwardness and that they know their innermost desires (3.2.100-116). When their judgement fails, they prefer to think of women as duplicitous than accept that they have erred (3.2.117-28). Jones explains the connection between competitiveness and such vices by suggesting that 'since social living inevitably entails competitiveness, the recurring motives are those of enhancing one's reputation or damaging that of others, self-advertisement, keeping up appearances, and hence sexual flirtatiousness and sexual boasting, as well as snobbishness, social climbing, and all forms of showing off'.¹⁸ The symptoms the widow enumerates suggest that the masculine ethic is competitive and uncharitable.

The widow attempts to show how social conditioning results in differences between men and women. The distinctive marks of Valentine's mind - determination, independence, complacency, a domineering personality - are masculine and the symbols of high status. Women depend on the approval of their society for their self-image, whereas

Valentine has been taught to disregard the judgement of others. Men are allowed to do what they wish, but women must do what becomes them and are not allowed even a minor divergence from the accepted code of conduct of their class; men use the fear of dishonour to control women (3.2.131-34). The widow refuses to conform to Valentine's stereotype of women as emotional and irrational; she is not susceptible to passion, has self-control and intelligence. The widow has previously judged Francisco by his clothes, but refuses to be classified by Valentine in accordance with them and the status they suggest, asking him to prioritize her qualities of mind (3.2.82-86) rather than gender and externals. As a woman, she refuses to depend on a man for status:

...are we so much below you,

That till you have us, are the toppes of nature,

To be accounted drones, without a difference?

(3.2.74-76)

Like Valentine, the widow asserts her need to choose her own place in society. Women are not, as Valentine had assumed, 'onely lumps, and undigested peeces,/ Lickt over to a forme, by our affections' (1.1.32-33). Valentine has previously advised his friends to marry 'a maide worth nothing' because 'theres a vertuous spell, in that word nothing' (2.2.91-92); but in the next scene we hear that men who are poor are nothing and not

even men (2.3.10), whereas Valentine regards consumption as being in opposition to femininity. In terms of status, women must be vacant, otherwise they are not women at all.

Despite Valentine's railing against the widow's being place-proud, status does matter. The widow argues that being place-proud is a necessity, otherwise there would be no point in having distinctions and orders. She debunks Valentine's seeming indifference to status:

...streetes, and walls,

And upper ends of tables, had they tongues

Could tell what blood has followed, and what fude

About your rankes.

(3.2.71-74)

She exposes the fact that Valentine's dream of a classless society is an impossibility. For the widow distinctions are important because they indicate a need for self-improvement and refinement. Without them, men would go back to the condition of beasts (3.2.77). The distinctions along the lines that Valentine has suggested are not valid because venereal disease has levelling powers against both class and gender distinctions (3.2.136-44). The widow subverts the claims of the male members of her class to detachment; such gentlemen pretend to be 'the coole things of the

time, the temperance,/ Meere emblems of the Law, and vales of Vertue' while succumbing to carnal sins (3.2.139-40). Valentine's betrayal of his friends suggests that, despite his claims to the contrary, he is part of the fallen world and susceptible to the frailty of the flesh (2.2.113-15).

In conclusion, Wit without Money examines the relevance of the patronage ethic associated with gentility to contemporary town living. This ethic is replaced by one based on charity and a pervasive goodwill which is couched, as in The Scornful Lady, in the language of indecorous wit. As in that play, the rhetoric of social bonding of the wit is shown to be suspect and interested but also becomes the carrier of values that the ending vindicates.

Through the use of women as emblems for a flawed gentry ethic, the play presents the risks of any emphasis on display, whether this is found in traditional hospitality or conspicuous consumption, at the expense of the mind. Charity is the noblest form of generosity and social bonding, not networking with a view to gaining something from all social transactions. The utilitarian ethic has even affected marriage, substituting wealth for sexual pleasure. It also means that people are pigeonholed in accordance with their wealth, clothes and gloss, leading to mistaken judgements, exclusion of those who are potentially more interesting and a life of boredom for those who think along these lines.

The association of women with property and the materialistic gentry ethic means that the acceptance of property and its responsibilities is associated with marriage. A similar connection of women with property and profit and a parallel between marriage and the protagonist's social integration is also seen in The Elder Brother.

The Scornful Lady, Wit without Money and The Wild-Goose Chase are plays which explore contradictions in definitions of gentility. First, theory recommends humility and inward virtue, whereas practice rewards boldness, externals and indecorum. Secondly, society prescribes different codes of conduct for men and women. Qualities like the assertion of one's will, the ability to dominate and a propensity to wildness seem to be highly valued in the public sphere of men, where a lack of civility is a sign of status. When women adopt these qualities, it is because they have internalized the values of their society, which they merely reflect. Feminine deceptiveness is the result of the flawed male view of honour which locates value in the face and clothes, not in inwardness, and identifies honour with reputation.

CHAPTER TEN

The Wild-Goose Chase (1621): Good Manners: Gentlemen and 'Gamesters'

A. Gentility and Play

The ambiguity between a theory of gentility that endorses humility and decorum and a reality that rewards exultant individualism and boldness, explored in Wit without Money,¹ is also part of the subtext of Mirabel, who is admired by his friends for having 'the gift of impudence' (1.2.54). Wit without Money focused on the positive, sociable aspects of dispensing with formal decorum. The Wild-Goose Chase, another solo Fletcher play, is a more sophisticated study of indecorum as counterproductive and attempts to define the ideal relationship between the decorous and the gentle, affectation and natural manners, politeness and assertion. Status allows a gentleman to experience life as play, but play is incompatible with good manners. Conflicting ideals of civility are drawn up in the context of opposed educational programmes, courtship rituals and forms of role-playing.

The association between gentility and a view of life as play is implicit in The Scornful Lady and Wit without Money, two plays which we

have already seen. In The Wild-Goose Chase and The Little French Lawyer the connection between gentility and play is articulated by the language.

Mirabel has traditionally been seen as an epicurean and Underwood in particular has seen the play in terms of a conflict between the landed gentry and the leisure class: the landed gentry aspires to the life of the epicure, while the leisure class is involved with duping the landed gentry which aspires to its mode of living.² However, the play does not represent Mirabel's behaviour as the result of a social antagonism; epicureanism is not Mirabel's personal fault, or that of a subdivision within the narrow social nexus of the play. It is the philosophy of his environment, whose fault is one of frivolity rather than leisure - the leisure class has not yet arrived. The epicurean imagery in the opening scene should not be seen in isolation but as part of a pervasive language of pleasure, play and diversion and its reverse, sobriety and seriousness. The opening scene puts in perspective Mirabel's subsequent airs; this environment sanctions self-indulgence and encourages giving free reign to one's temperament, at least in men. Too many of the activities of both young gentlemen and ladies have a tinge of diversion; and this ethic is not restricted to banquets and travelling - it also taints personal and social relationships. The play explores the dangers in a community where happiness lies in pleasing oneself; Mirabel's 'happiness is in mine own content' and such selfishness

is associated with the idea of 'play' (2.1.3-4). It is worth noting that the play inverts the comic pattern and begins with the par excellence comic conclusion, a scene of festivity and a banquet, and ends, on a comparatively subdued tone, with a restoration of seriousness.

In The Wild-Goose Chase social life as well as courtship is represented as a constant strife between play and seriousness, with play having the upper hand until Act 5. Marriage is associated with gravity (1.2.68-79), it is 'dull, and home-spun' (1.2.73-74), a liberal morality with play. Mirabel prefers to make 'mine own play' (2.1.3); his behaviour to Oriana is associated with play (2.1.164). When Pinac courts Lillia, Mirabel is immensely amused by 'this sport' (2.2.76). Modesty and good manners are Mirabel's objects of merry-making (3.1.18). Other references to play include 3.1.72, 3.1.80, 3.1.272-81. 3.1.310, 3.1.383. These references suggest a view of social life as play, but sexuality is also associated with it. Mirabel judges women by their ability to provide play for him (1.3.220-21, 2.1.190). Mirabel, who is adept at most forms of social play, like role-playing, also makes claims to being a sexual authority; a gentleman's control of social play can be redeemed in the private sphere as sexual mastery, and the reverse. Mirabel's name comes from the Latin for wonderful, and what makes him the most desirable model of gentility is his control over most forms of play. In 1.3 Mirabel associates sexuality with play and describes himself as a 'Gamester' (220-21); and in 3.1 Lilia

echoes this by describing the best gentlemen as those who have a light touch because 'the best Game/ Is plaid still by the best Gamesters' (117-18). This alternative basis for sexual desirability is justified by the prevalence of play in the social sphere.

Play takes many different forms in The Wild-Goose Chase: the witty contest of the two sexes, Mirabel's dramaturgical control of his friends' courtship for his entertainment, sexuality, courtship and self-dramatization. In all of these cases play is associated with control; Mirabel enjoys controlling the fates of his friends and does not hesitate to give them bad advice in order to maximize his amusement (3.1.303-14). His friends attest to his control over them; his fortune directs theirs (5.2.149). Furthermore, play disrupts the language of courtship and affection precisely because it is associated with control. Love requires that one relinquishes part of one's playfulness and freedom (2.1.15-20). It also means that one must surrender control and be willing to be humiliated; Bellure has to promise that he is willing to be laughed at and endure it patiently (4.2.102-103) before he can win Rosalura.

As in The Scornful Lady, the language of the society of fashion is incompatible with that of courtship and affection, and intimate revelations result in public ridicule. Lovers are frequently turned into objects of amusement as concealed eavesdroppers appear out of nowhere, ruining all solemnity (2.2.76, 2.3.114, 4.2.70). No wonder Mirabel loves Oriana but

prefers to pretend that he does not; love can only be expressed in the playful language of histrionic rejection. Mirabel poses as superior to the passions that 'these fools' have, although his constant railing negates his claims to upper-class detachment. One is allowed to yield to one's feelings but, to preserve one's honour, one must do so with care 'not to be thought to yeeld' (5.2.65, 5.3.23-24). At the end of the play Mirabel claims to have known that Oriana was the Italian woman, and it is quite possible that he has gone along with Oriana's role-playing because it allows him to fulfil a pattern of social play that requires one to yield and to avoid being 'thought to yeeld'.

Rituals of play allow one to maintain control of awkward social situations but do not take into account those aspects of living that are not subject to control, such as Fortune and falling in love. Hoy has suggested that the play ends simply because 'it is time for it to end', since 'the scheme by which he is eventually tricked is no more clever than previous schemes that he has seen through'³ but in fact Fletcher, through the introduction of the language of Fortune, which suggests a loss of detachment and control, and business, which is associated with seriousness, suggests in the last Act that Mirabel's mastery of social and sexual play will end soon. The language of play is at that point replaced by the language of seriousness. Such language has until then been circulating in the play but fighting a losing battle. It is significant that de Gard, Oriana's brother and 'a Noble

stayd Gentleman', as he is described in the *dramatis personae*, is associated with business in the first few lines of the play (1.1.48). When Rosalura decides to do some serious thinking about Oriana's problem, she refers to thinking as business (2.3.23); in yet one instance of her serious side, Rosalura tells Bellure that she is busy (2.3.55). References to Fortune can also be found in other previous scenes and marriage is spoken of as 'fortune' (1.1.133, 3.1.77, 88, 92, 197, 203-5, 347, 369; 4.1.34, 67); but in Act 5 they become more prominent as Mirabel loses control and submits to his transformation. The language of play is now replaced by references to business. De Gard will be serious and diligent (5.1.14). Lugier refers to the new trick as business (5.1.23), foreshadowing its success; this time play is over. When the merchant's factor goes to Mirabel to announce the Italian lady's arrival, their conversation is interspersed with references to business (5.2.79, 83). The Italian lady has come to France 'about some Business' (5.2.111); seeing Mirabel is 'all her Business' (5.2.118). She is 'busie' (5.4.1, 5.5.10); and Mirabel refers to his friends' bidding farewell to the women they have been courting as business (5.5.17). The references to Fortune and luck also increase dramatically in the same scene (5.2.125, 130, 149). Lugier refers to the last trick as the last 'adventure', i.e. their last trial at chance (5.3.1); and Pinac refers to Mirabel's Italian lady as 'a handsome fortune' (5.6.22). At the same time, we are allowed insights into Mirabel's serious aspects. He loves Oriana, though he pretends that it is otherwise (5.1.3-6); and he has saved the

merchant's life during his stay in Italy. Perhaps Mirabel has really been transformed into 'a proper Gentleman' in his travels as de Gard describes him in the opening scene (46) and, like his circle, we were also deceived by his pose as a playful gallant.

Language is the medium of most kinds of play; those who take it seriously eventually find that it is an unreliable index to reality and individual identity. Each time seriousness is restored language takes a back seat. Mirabel advises the two sisters to 'leave prating' if they wish to find husbands (3.1.156). Mirabel himself realizes that he 'must leave prating' when he hears that Oriana is to marry the duke's nephew (3.1.369). In 5.3 Rosalura states that she cannot contain her feelings any longer, and neither can she give any more 'hard language' (11). There is a distinctive business-like tone of urgency each time de Gard and Lugier are about to embark on a new trick to catch Mirabel, quite unlike the usual garrulity of most conversations in the play (3.1.25-30, 5.1.1-14). When seriousness and feeling replace play and detachment, language is reduced to broken segments of stichomythia (5.6.90-100). Mirabel, patron of play, states that the promises he gave Oriana before he left have no value because words can be separated from their meaning and used only as forms for play. Oriana believes that love can be regulated by marital pre-contracts and vows, although Mirabel refuses to lend validity to ties of this kind (2.1.79-109). The proper use of language is restored in Act 5. When

Mirabel sees Oriana disguised as an Italian lady and decides to relinquish play, he is willing to accept a correspondence between words and intentions; when she tells him that his words of love are 'but your Ceremonies' he replies that his words speak his soul and he is even willing to make promises (5.6.69-73). The restoration of meaning to words is paralleled by a faith, previously unknown to Mirabel, in the reliability of female externals: 'if she be that Woman,/ She appeares to be' (5.5.7-8). When Bellure, at the end of the play, asks Rosalura if she is asking him 'seriously' to make her pregnant and she emphatically replies that this is so indeed (5.6.100), this recalls an earlier moment in the play when Rosalura had replied 'most seriously', only to mock him a few lines later (4.2.65). This time, everyone means business and language means what it says.

B. 'so he exceed not': Gentility as Proportion

By Renaissance standards, the educational system of our century creates scholars, but not gentlemen. The ideal of gentility revolved around an avoidance of extremes and one-sided emphasis on any particular quality; the gentleman should aim at all-round development, not specialization. Gentility that relies on one quality only is a contradiction in terms. The community of The Wild-Goose Chase suffers from a lack of proportion and balance which is incompatible with good manners, the central concern of the play. The absence of a sense of measure is related to the different educational programmes for the two sexes. The education of the young gentlemen aims to ensure success in the public arena. The purpose of travelling is to make them bold, and on their return they are clearly expected to display what they have learnt (1.2.51-53, 1.2.64-66); they are, however, lacking in learning, social graces and wit (2.2.52-59). The young gentlemen represent recognizable types of gentility but ones that emphasize certain qualities to the exclusion of balance and proportion. It is therefore very appropriate that Mirabel is represented as a fashionable gentleman, but is also established as a character with disturbed humours (1.1.60-62). In the opening scene de Gard tells La Castre that his son has become 'a proper Gentleman' in his travels (1.1.46), but this only helps to underline the fact, when he actually appears, that Mirabel is not a proper

gentleman. Mirabel has an excess of both good and bad qualities; de Gard admits that Mirabel has all the formal features of gentility like wealth and land but not the right personality traits. He suggests that a rich mind with moderate wealth might prove the better fortune for Oriana (1.1.125-33), introducing an idea which recurs later; that of the golden mean and self-knowledge as the true gentility. Mirabel's companions also possess gentlemanly qualities, the ability to defend one's honour and a sprightly wit. However, polite conduct in the play is a matter of balance rather than specific qualities and the fashionable schemes of education encourage one-sidedness.

Not all is balanced on the female side, either. The education Lugier has provided to Lillia and Rosalura has all the external marks of a humanistic education but not the decorum and sense of measure that such an education ought to instil. Instead of possessing different qualities in a balance, they can sustain public facades based on one isolated quality each time. The corrective to this one-sidedness is a sense of proportion which provides integration of conflicting qualities. Instead, their style of behaviour is a fitful alternation of these; in order to get husbands, they have been 'Statelý, Coy, Demure, Careless, Light, Giddy,/ And plai'd at all points' (3.1.44-45). Lugier is told that the humanistic education the two sisters have received from him is of little value in a society of fashion. Lillia believes that he should have taught them 'Doggs, dice, Hawkes, Banketts,

masks, free and faire Meetings,/ To have studied Gownes and Dressings' (3.1.58-59); and reaches the sober conclusion that 'a Dowry of good breeding is worth nothing' (3.1.64). However, affected and immoderate manners are not the same as 'good breeding'. What has been wrong is not so much the scheme of education prescribed for the upper class as the reasons why it has been pursued and the lack of a sense of measure. Nantolet admits that the purpose behind his daughters' education has been to help them 'rank themselves with women of fair fashion' (1.3.8). The gratuitous and one-sided acquisition of learning in 'women of fair fashion' and 'bought experience' in gentlemen results in pride and an obsession with display. The women's compulsion to make a show of their intellectual credentials is the equivalent of Mirabel's debt-book of his mistresses. Both sexes are not concerned with achieving inward balance but distinction in a particular aspect of social behaviour. As we shall see later, good manners are synonymous with a sense of measure.

C. 'Mark how I behave myself and follow': Gentility and Theatricality

A penchant for display, for being noted by others, pervaded the interaction of the gentleman with his environment and was one of the accusations frequently levelled at the gallant. Brathwait complains that the young gentleman 'verily imagins the eyes of the whole Citie are fixed on him, as the very patterne which they esteeme worthy imitation' (EG, p.6). Young gentlemen believe that 'it is a brave thing to be observed in the eye of the world; to have our persons admired, our selves in publike resorts noted' (p.37). This was largely the product of the aggregation of gentry in London, where status could be aired not simply within the confines of the traditional household but to a larger number of spectators. In Brathwait's description it also sounds like a form of status anxiety, establishing oneself as a gentleman 'in the eye of the world'. Any kind of attention, even negative, was welcome for the gallant, what was important was to be 'observed': in The Guls Hornebook (1609), a satirical version of the conduct book, Thomas Dekker advises the gallant who visits a tavern to 'discourse as loud as you can, no matter to what purpose, if you but make a noise and laugh in fashion, and have a good sour face to promise quarreling, you shal be much observed'.⁴

Mirabel's favourite form of play is self-dramatization. Unlike Bellure and Pinac, Mirabel avoids being enslaved by collective perceptions of himself by manipulating how he will be seen and by trying to anticipate what others will say about him. The first piece of information that we learn about him is that he does not wish de Gard to announce his arrival because 'he meanes to be his own glad Messenger' (1.1.56). Mirabel has a deep awareness of the image he projects to other people and enjoys acting as a role model for his friends: 'mark how I behave my self and follow' (1.2.88). The constant sense of giving or directing a performance suggests a latent narcissism which later becomes openly asserted as he takes pride in the image-making services he offers his friends: 'I shall grow in love sure/ With mine own happy head' (3.1.313-14). For Mirabel every single one of his actions is a public gesture; one cannot be a gentleman unless his personal virtues, including sexual potency, have been first tried and demonstrated in the social sphere (1.2.81-84). It is not enough for Mirabel to have slept with all these women; he must keep a book with their names to carry around and display. Even in his soliloquies (for instance in 2.1.74-78 and 3.1.412-18), it is hard to know if we have access to Mirabel's consciousness, or whether the performance extends even to himself and the audience. Mirabel continues to tease his social circle and the audience to the very end of the play, which can be seen as either a romantic comedy or a social satire of the relationship between desirability and power,

depending on whether one believes Mirabel's comment that he had recognized Oriana.

In The Wild-Goose Chase, role-playing is not restricted to Mirabel. It goes on all the time, and even matchmaking consists in staging a good performance. Pinac will play his part in courting Lillia (2.1.37-38). Before courting her, he tries on different manners and rhetorical figures (2.2.40-60). People assume roles and dispositions (2.2.75, 2.2.82, 2.2.108-12). 'How has Pinac performed?' Bellure asks Mirabel, curious to know how his friend's courtship of Lillia has gone (2.3.31). When Oriana is courted by someone else, Mirabel feels that he is playing the fool (3.1.376). Women also think of life as role-playing and enjoy it as much as men: Rosalura feels compelled to behave in a light manner occasionally, 'though all the world saw it' (2.3.14). As Oriana's final trick suggests, success does not depend so much on the value of the self but on the appeal of the performance. Mirabel, master of play, has a revulsion from female sexuality which derives from a good awareness of the performative nature of femininity. Women are adept at presenting themselves as virgins when they are not, and Oriana's disguises only exacerbate his ambivalence about dissimulation techniques he himself deploys, then disavows: 'nothing but Tricks? devises?' (4.3.132). However, Oriana uses role-playing in order to reclaim Mirabel to virtue (1.1.133-35), and never purely in order to pursue her pleasure. Her role-playing is business, not play.

The play begins with a very populated opening scene which foreshadows the overwhelming importance of public life in The Wild-Goose Chase, the privileging of social skills, appearances and values at the expense of self-knowledge and the private life. In this scene de Gard advises Oriana to keep her feelings for Mirabel secret because people have begun to discuss them, but she refuses to lend public discourse any validity and qualifies the ability of language to reveal the truth about a woman's true character (1.1.92-120). This theme is reiterated in Act 2, Scene 3, where Rosalura and Oriana decide that 'conscience' should be valued above 'Report' (12-19). The emphasis on social living is not restricted to the social embroidering of the opening scene with its recommendation of secrecy. It can also be seen in the banquet of 1.3, where intimate matters are, typically in this play, discussed in asides in the midst of communal festivities and where eligible partners are asked to make a display of their qualifications under the watchful eyes of their parents. It is further seen in the scenes of courtship of Bellure and Pinac (2.2 and 2.3) where the tutelary spirit of the parents is replaced by Mirabel's direction. The numerous asides in the play function as a running commentary that supplements an endless series of performances.

The overwhelming emphasis on the public life is also suggested by the fact that even in the most private locations there is little room for solitude, especially for women, who find their privacy invaded by men. Both

Pinac and Bellure intrude into the personal space of the women they love and cannot resist watching them in order to discover who they really are; when women turn out to be different in private, they are accused of being hypocritical (2.2.145, 2.3.80). Men find it hard to understand the effect of the constraints of honour on women, who are constantly observed and threatened with infamy (3.1.292-98). Pinac and Bellure have an ardent desire for a stable female identity; the ideal woman is one who accepts a man's honest speech without too much ceremony (1.3.155-56). Yet in wishing women to stop role-playing, the men are asking for something which they have made impossible. Like men, women relish being public performers, but for them role-playing is not only a matter of pleasure and diversion; it is their protection against the constant fear of having their reputation tarnished (2.2.140-51).

After scenes 2.2 and 2.3 have established that those whose honour is at the mercy of others' language are wary of being observed and forced to play with appearances (as in The Scornful Lady), scene 3.1 inverts the situation, by placing a man in the feminine position of suffering public ridicule as a result of dishonour. The only difference is that Bellure's dishonour results from an insult to his status, not to his sexual purity. After he has been insulted by Rosalura, who pretends to have passed him for a gentleman's servant rather than a gentleman, Bellure begins to think that everyone is looking at him and laughing at his disgrace. He feels

constantly observed (3.1.282-90) and he resents it as much as the women did before. He asks passers-by to maintain a serious expression on their face, thinking that he is the object of all mirth. Whereas the female concept of honour privileges the inner life above outward representation and seeks the truth about the self in the territory of private life, men believe that the signs of individual identity are inscribed on someone's face and clothes. Bellure's demand that those he meets must 'set your faces soberly' (3.1.276) so that he can save his honour suggests the absurdity of a theory of civility which overemphasizes the value of personal honour or 'face' (we still say 'to lose face'); significantly, this is a word which men use to describe women in the play (1.3.18, 1.3.100-104, 1.3.154, 2.2.62). Men assume that they have access to women's inwardness and can tell what others are thinking simply by looking at their facial expression; Bellure claims to have access to the thoughts of Rosalura, Mirabel, and ordinary passers-by simply by looking at their face: 'I know your minde' (3.1.273, 283). Bellure's concept of honour confuses performance and reality - it assumes a correspondence between what one is and what one seems to be. His idea of personal honour as dependent on others' facial expression is the equivalent of the male view of feminine modesty as reputation. In both cases honour depends on performance rather than intrinsic value. Through Bellure and his obsession with faces it is suggested that serious people can be superficial; this helps explain why in this play and Wit

without Money breaches of decorum are associated with an ideal of noble manners that are not skin-deep.

The association of gossip with romances that describe improbable feats and sensual reading that Oriana makes foreshadows the fictionalization of reality through language and the relationship of language to desire, which are both recurrent themes in the play. Bellure is sure that he can please Rosalura sexually, but he must talk himself into her favour first (1.2.33-40, 47-50, 2.1.28-30). Language becomes the medium of sexuality because of its alliance to fiction. Mirabel uses different tales for courting different women; courtship is fiction-making (2.1.120-23). According to de Gard, language does not just serve desire for Mirabel; it is used as a substitute for it. Mirabel is 'a glorious talker, and a Legend maker/ Of idle tales, and trifles' (2.1.200-201); when Lugier tries to talk to him about Oriana, he replies 'turn over, and end that story' (3.1.319). He is finally caught by the description of the Italian lady he hears from the merchant's factor. Greenblatt would say that one consequence of living life as histrionic improvisation is that the category of the real merges with that of the fictive.⁵

The masculine lack of insight into the true signs of individual identity is not restricted to Pinac and Bellure. Even Mirabel, who claims to be aware of the role-playing that goes on around him, eventually succumbs to Oriana's final trick. Yet this should not come as a surprise. From the

beginning of the play Mirabel has been associated with the senses of touch and taste, which is how he experiences women and sexuality (1.2.5-10, 1.3.108-16). This suggests his emphasis on externals and forms without true insight into the nature of people and things, a fact which is verified by the ending. Touch and taste are the least noble of the senses and suggest an inadequate grasp of reality; because of an education which has developed their intellect (1.3.27), women are more qualified to see through appearances. Mirabel has all along posed as a realist who can see through female role-playing. The ending suggests that he is not the realist he has pretended to be. The ability to make accurate judgements of others is the acid test of a realist, but Mirabel mistakes a good performance for reality; and he first hears about the Italian lady from the merchant's factor, which means that he relies on language for his opinion of her, 'Report', not 'conscience'.

D. 'Italian liberty' and 'Civility'

Defining good manners and differentiating them from formalized codes of conduct, fashionable or traditional, is a pervasive concern in The Wild-Goose Chase. The different educational ideals prescribed for the two sexes are evaluated in accordance with their ability to develop noble manners, teach through experience and enhance self-knowledge. Travelling was considered to be an important part of the education of the gentleman, and Peacham is not alone in recommending it as a good way of developing the gentleman's judgement and teaching him knowledge of himself (CG, p.159); but he is quick to draw a distinction between travel 'ad voluptatem vel ad utilitatem', pleasure or profit (p.161). This was a distinction that had begun to emerge in the latter part of the sixteenth century, when travel began to lose its educational value and two types of traveller emerged. One type was that of the dilettante pleasure-seeker, who travelled because it was fashionable, and returned to England with all the affectations and vices of the foreign country, and the other who regarded travel from an educational point of view.⁶

Italy, from which Mirabel has just returned, was regarded as particularly detrimental to gentry and courtier virtue, and the type of the 'Italianate Englishman' summed up all the worst features of the affected

and pleasure-seeking traveller. He was an epicure in living, an atheist in doctrine, knew no paradise but pleasure and returned home bringing with him foreign affectations and vices, with a smattering of learning and a pretence of worldly wisdom; he denounced everything English, in dress, language, or behaviour as vulgar and base.⁷ Even Cleland, who was less wary of the dangers of travelling than Ascham and Mulcaster had been, described Italy as a dangerous country abounding in 'pleasures and diuerse allurements to sinne' (*IYNM*, p.266). Puritans complained of English translations of Italian books which had corrupted English manners.⁸ Italian manners had infiltrated into English life not only through travelling gentlemen but also through Italian manuals on deportment which instructed impressionable gentlemen in affectation.⁹ This was largely due to the fact that pupils often misunderstood the precepts of the masters; the Italian model of civility did not crudely propose that noble manners were affected manners. Leon Battista Alberti insisted that civility should be natural, authentic, and not imitated or assumed; nothing in one's deportment should suggest artificiality or design.¹⁰ Another reason for the misinterpretation of Italian civility in England might be that many Italian conduct books were not sophisticated enough to conceal the preparation involved in seemingly natural manners as well as Castiglione had done.¹¹

The Italianate Englishman breached his country's rules of civility, which vehemently denounced affectation, 'this mimicke and apish action'

(EG, p.87), which could be seen in speech, deportment and facial expression (IYNM, p.65, EG, pp.7, 87). Those who are of noble birth are the least affected, and it is diplomatically assumed that they have 'an inherent propriety' in them (EG, p.7), and therefore do not need to put up a studied performance. The English ideal of decorum in speech is 'plainnes of words' (IYNM, p.71); in bodily movement, Brathwait, in conformity with the no-nonsense approach of English conduct books, recommends the 'Sober carriage or deportment of the Body' (EG, p.87) as the corrective to affectation. Affectation suggests pride (IYNM, p.65) and is incompatible with self-knowledge. Cleland and Peacham both recommend self-knowledge as one of the imperatives of gentility, and Brathwait provides a definition of it as 'an excellent knowledge grounded on true Humilitie' (EG, p.76); the man who lacks self-knowledge assumes that he knows everything, contrary to the Socratic dictum (EG, p.77). Self-knowledge in the period meant humility, an awareness of one's position and limitations, not as we would define it today, an exploration of one's potential and ambitions. The affected man did not have access to self-knowledge because affectation implied pride, and pride was incompatible with the humility of self-knowledge.

Mirabel, then, is a recognizable traveller type - the pleasure-seeking dilettante, whose travelling has not fulfilled the educational purposes Peacham has delineated for his gentleman, self-knowledge and a

sharpening of judgement. Mirabel's acquaintance with Italy and its manners has been too crude, too superficial, too sensory. As the epicurean imagery of touch and taste suggests in the opening scene, Mirabel has restricted himself to appearances and never penetrated into the nature of things. Lillia tells Mirabel, describing her ideal man, whom she purposefully shapes as a foil to Mirabel that

Travail'd he should be, but through himself exactly;

For 'tis fairer to know manners well, than Countries

(1.3.186-87)

As an Italianate Frenchman, Mirabel has brought back from his travels, in place of self-knowledge, an admiration for all Italian fashions and affectation in his manners, the vice unanimously denounced by conduct books. The travellers display all the well-known symptoms of affectation in their manners and carriage; Lugier describes them as 'Gim-cracks', affected persons whose lack of decorum is evident in their grimaces and gestures (3.1.5). Had Mirabel perused The Courtier, he might have given a better performance, and he might have avoided the Italianisms in his speech; to Rosalura it is evident that Mirabel's depravity is a well-calculated show (3.1.72-73). His coldness drops every time Oriana adopts a successful role, admitting that he has been too indulgent to his foolery (4.3.90-91) and stating that when he sees cause he can 'both doe, and

suffer,/ Freely, and feelingly, as a true Gentleman' (4.3.30-31). Mirabel may be accused of affectation but, in turn, also accuses the two sisters of 'studied Whim-whams' and 'set faces' (3.1.164); the women's strange behaviours are also carefully contrived.

Mirabel's obsession with all things foreign is part of the play's representation of difference as a source of attraction. Those who are shy are impressed by audacity, and the reverse; the lovers are even physical opposites. Lovers are strangers (1.3.66, 3.1.191-92, 4.1.39-40) and love is represented as a search for the other person's true identity, concealed by conventional social signs and affectation. To Pinac, Lillia is a country to be explored, an intellectual challenge (2.2.164-65). Those who court a lady must prove that they are interested enough to persist after the initial rebuffs (4.1.39-41, 89-91); courtesy requires that a gentleman never rejects his mistress at the first trial (3.1.228-31). Mirabel's ideal of courtesy is the Italian balance between intimacy and reserve: 'as when ye think y'are known best, ye are a stranger' (1.2.25). Difference usually turns out to be performative only; but it is a source of attraction, so if it is not there it has to be constructed through language, disguise and other forms of play.

Role-playing is not necessarily a bad thing - after all, we have seen that the language of play is so pervasive that those who cannot speak it are socially handicapped; but affectation is the negative, antisocial version of role-playing. Mirabel's French environment is well-familiarized with the

tricks of the role-playing trade; but affectation is the Italian malady Mirabel has brought home from his travels. The affected person is never in control of his role-playing and does it purely for pleasure or self-interest. Bellure attempts to direct the manners of Rosalura (4.2.19-30), although the play suggests that good manners and affectation do not mix. Bellure's own behaviour is directed by Mirabel; he is never in control of his role-playing; in turn, Mirabel's antics are borrowed. Men attempt to teach women decorous forms of behaviour, while lacking themselves the inward basis of good behaviour which a gentleman should have: 'manners,/ Truth and sobriety' (2.3.100-101). Both Oriana and the two sisters think of themselves as socializers of men; women can form men and teach them social graces (1.1.133-36, 3.1.109-35).

At the other end of the spectrum from Mirabel's Italianate playfulness and affectation is the imperative of seriousness and plainness of Mirabel's native country. The Italian influence was much stronger in France,¹² and the ideal of plainness in manners is actually a masked version of the 'Sober carriage' recommended by English conduct books. Lugier hopes to show the travellers that 'a home-spun wit,/ A plain French understanding may cope with 'em' (4.1.6-7); Bellure feels attracted to Rosalura because she is 'plain-spoken' (1.3.152). Mirabel is not a good prospect for a 'plain-meaning' woman (3.1.73). However, although the risks of the Italian liberty and playfulness are explored, the standard of civility

endorsed by the play is not simply a grave carriage and plain language. Lillia tells Mirabel, describing her ideal man, that foolish girls are won with language, whereas women appreciate character (1.3.192); but language is also the medium of desire (1.2.33-40, 47-50, 2.1.28-30). Pinac does not get very far when he professes his honest intentions to Lillia in the language of courtly love (2.2.139-40). The declarations that both sides make in favour of plain language and against play are triumphantly discredited by the action or by themselves. Lillia tells Pinac that he will have to be wise before she can love him (4.1.155), a statement echoed by Mirabel who stipulates that Oriana should become wiser before he can marry her (4.3.131). Yet the demand for wisdom and seriousness is often no more than a pose, another form of play. Lillia has previously admitted in the company of her sister that she appreciates playfulness in a gentleman and would never marry a man who must be taught because 'the best Game/ Is plaied still by the best Gamesters' (3.1.117-18). In public and in theory the women argue that 'a man has manners;/ A Gentleman, Civility, and Breeding' (4.2.89-90), whereas in private they admit that in practice 'a free light Touch or two becomes a Gentleman' (3.1.113).

These suggest that the play does not revolve around a crude contrast of play versus seriousness. Seriousness is also treated as evil and of questionable value throughout the play. Mirabel does not want to be married to 'a sullen set of Sentences' (1.3.216); 'serious and sad things are

ever still suspicious' (2.2.57). Lillia, in defence of herself, tells Pinac that a sullen woman can only bring sadness and boredom (4.1.84-86). The ideal of the play lies in a sense of measure and proportion more than in any particular quality. Lillia believes that a woman can be what she pleases so long as she does not exceed the golden mean (2.2.152-53). The same applies to the gentleman: a light touch becomes him, 'so he exceed not' (3.1.113-14). Mirabel admires the 'Italian liberty' (1.2.86), this lack of restraint in behaviour. Women, however, risk their reputation if they allow their lighter aspects, their 'freedoms' to become public, although these dispositions are irrelevant to their moral identity; a woman can maintain a playful style of behaviour and still preserve her reputation (2.2.108-12, 2.3.90-101). Affectation blurs the distinction between moral and aesthetic categories, externals and inwardness, 'Report' and 'conscience'. Bellure's attempt to teach Rosalura manners by forcing her to assume a grave facial expression makes more obvious the absurdity of assuming that a playful style suggests that a woman is frivolous. When Lillia states that 'a free light Touch or two becomes a Gentleman' she refers to a quality which shows him to best advantage - 'sets him seemly off' (3.1.113-14); playfulness should be an aesthetic, not a moral category, the grace that prevents one from becoming ponderous like Bellure.

Both extremes, of seriousness and play, then, are breaches of polite conduct and speech decorum and denote affectation. Decorum is

represented as the ability to find the right time and place for each action, not invading others' privacy, not tarnishing women's reputations, using the right words for the occasion and the person, applying play and seriousness in the right proportion in one's actions and language. Both Bellure and Mirabel are accused of lacking 'good manners' (2.3.70, 3.1.18). When Oriana pretends to be demented, Mirabel tells Bellure to put off his lightness because 'this is no time for mirth, nor place' (4.3.89) and asks him to stop talking (4.3.104-105). Furthermore, matching one's behaviour to the circumstances includes the ability to balance theoretical precepts and practical situations, the code of conduct and the unpredictable. Lillia and Rosalura rigidly conform to Lugier's 'grave precepts', unable to apply them intelligently to everyday social situations. The same rigidity can be seen in Bellure who is unable to cope with the surprises social play throws at him. Bellure has prepared a speech for a merry and affable woman, and is discomfited when Rosalura turns out to be serious because he was 'prepar'd for th'other way' (2.3.60). Civility includes the adaptability and grace that allows one to cope with the contingencies theory has not prepared one for.

Good manners also involve acknowledging the worth of others. The men attach identity firmly to wealth and social status. Bellure feels confused because he cannot challenge Lillia to fight with him after she has refused to recognize his status as a gentleman. Love requires that one

values the worth of one's partner (3.1.233, 237-42, 246). Lillia and Rosalura pretend to misread their suitors' identity and pass them for a servant and a tramp respectively, ignoring the clothes on which their status is inscribed and privileging qualities of mind, 'Civility, and Breeding' (4.2.90). 'Do I look like a Carrier?' asks Bellure when Rosalura passes him for a gentleman's servant (2.2.134); but she prefers to define him by his manners. Bellure is not a gentleman because he has invaded her privacy. Later, when Bellure tells Rosalura that he is a gentleman, she replies that 'it seems no less, sir' (4.2.58); this is the scene when Bellure commits several crimes against good manners. Her reply suggests that he only seems to be a gentleman but is in fact 'some mighty Dairy-Maid in mans clothes' (4.2.87); 'a man has manners;/ A Gentleman, Civility, and Breeding' (4.2.89-90). To Mirabel, however, Oriana's value is always dependent on the social and financial assets that accompany her qualities of mind and physical attractiveness; in Act 5, the language of sexual attraction is interspersed with the vocabulary of finance (2.105-15 & 133-34, 4.11-16, 6.9-11 & 63-65).

In addition to acknowledging the worth of others and respecting their private space, decorum also involves, as I have mentioned, the ability to balance play and seriousness. The drawback to Bellure's ideal of civility is that it overemphasizes seriousness; it is too rigid and ponderous, making Bellure so stiff as if he were made of wood, 'a man of Timber' (4.2.80).

Because Rosalura insulted him by not acknowledging his gentility and by rejecting his courtship, Bellure requires that she must now woo him so that he will be able to scorn her 'asmuch' and receive a satisfaction 'equall to' the disgrace he suffered from her (3.1.292-96). Bellure has a view of relationships as an exchange where everything must be duly repaid and balanced with great precision. Such a schematic view of honour leads Bellure to a serious breach of decorum in 3.1, where he threatens Rosalura with dishonour, and nevertheless thinks of himself as a 'civill Suiter', with Mirabel's blessings (3.1.308); the same formalistic code later leads him to the even more serious offence of trying to frighten a woman in 4.2. Bellure promises to appear a gentleman from now on (4.2.107); he will appear to be a gentleman but not necessarily be one.

Bellure is finally dismissed with advice from one of Rosalura's women that when he comes next he should bring with him more mercy (4.2.112). Formalized and affected patterns of behaviour, whether they emphasize seriousness or play, deny the grace and humility that civility involves. The civil suitor is immune to narcissism (2.2.155). Under Bellure's threats, Rosalura tells Bellure that she would do anything to please him (3.1.290); but the civil suitor aims to please a woman, not to get pleasure. Bellure should bring more mercy with him next time because good manners require tolerance, humility and respect for the privacy, reputation and

feelings of others. When Mirabel's good manners are restored, he tells Oriana that he will take her as his wife 'upon meer Compassion' (5.6.85).

Mercy is incompatible with Bellure's formalistic sense of honour, which insists on schematic, exact retribution. Bellure first introduces himself to us as a man who can 'fight with any man, at any weapon' (1.2.45) but who cannot bring himself to use the language that would court a woman (1.2.31-50). He is incapable of the subtler interplay of language and feeling that courtship involves. His inflexibility makes him insist on the schematic retribution of the duel and he feels frustrated because women are beyond the reach of this masculine and aristocratic practice (3.1.300-301). By this time, however, the play has repeatedly shown that this is an age of feminine discourse rather than masculine force, that civility relies on the sophisticated manipulation of feeling rather than force. Bellure emerges as cruel rather than honourable. As in The Elder Brother, the virtues of the contemplative life, learning and wit, are transformed into weapons of the active life. Lugier, the opponent of Mirabel's fashionable sophistication, is not a Renaissance humanist advocating withdrawal from his society and its frivolity. He rather prefers to beat it at its own game and advises de Gard that 'since he has begun with wit, let wit revenge it;/ Keep your sword close, wee'll cut his throat a new way' (3.1.12-13). De Gard clearly thinks of duelling as outdated (3.1.22-23); the duel has been replaced by the contest of wit and the flexibility of mercy, and perhaps a sense of humour.

Bellure makes the mistake of reacting in a serious way to a situation that demands playfulness (4.2.19-70). Those who insist too much on the fine distinctions of etiquette eventually lose their sense of humour; as Mirabel reminds us, we should not weigh our thoughts and behaviour in the 'Gold-weights of discretion' (1.3.218); fine discrimination may be good for scales used to weigh gold, but cumbersome for ordinary social interaction.

This, however, does not mean that the play rejects Bellure's schematic and punctilious civility for the sake of the irresponsible-but-spontaneous model of Mirabel. Although the view of civility that requires an exact exchange between people is qualified by an ideal of mercy and flexibility, Mirabel's reformation in the final Act is accompanied by references to debt, obligation and repayment. This is foreshadowed at the end of 4.3 where Mirabel tells Oriana that she is indebted to him for her cure (148). Mirabel is obliged to the Italian lady's brother (5.2.80-81); the lady would willingly make a tender of herself to Mirabel (5.2.109). There are also references to the repayment of debts (5.2.112, 5.4.12-13). Mirabel is obliged to her for her journey (5.4.2); and he wishes he could recompense the lady's offerings with the service of his life (5.6.56-57). One cannot do away completely with forms, codes, promises, debts, obligations and marital pre-contracts; but one should not be enslaved by them.

In sum, The Wild-Goose Chase explores different models of the education that can be used to fashion a gentleman, and suggests that the

way of reconciling the humanistic imperative of the virtuous life with fashionable manners is a sense of measure. This sense of measure is also related to the ideal of decorum that the play formulates. This relies not on possessing specific qualities but, as in The Little French Lawyer, on the ability to apply the right style of behaviour to different circumstances and people instead of becoming enslaved by a code of conduct; one should have a sense of measure and context. To be constructive, role-playing should take into account the feelings of others and the circumstances; in other words, it should be tempered with decorum. Politeness rather than role-playing and fashion emerge as the axis of gentlemanly behaviour. Above all, good manners involve placing inward balance above codes. People, however, are not concerned with achieving inward balance but distinction in a particular aspect of social behaviour. This is suggested in the linguistic excesses of most characters in The Scornful Lady, the obsession with consumption, display and competitiveness in Wit without Money, the fitful alternation of contradictory qualities in the women of The Wild-Goose Chase and the duelling code of The Little French Lawyer. The emphasis on formal decorum in The Scornful Lady, Wit without Money, The Wild-Goose Chase and The Little French Lawyer is the result of a false view of honour which emphasizes externals over inwardness. The forms of polite society are a cloak for animal impulses.

With his love of travel, Mirabel would seem to epitomize the gallant's refusal to commit himself to the inward stability suggested by allegiance to a particular place. Yet the play also suggests that a gentleman can deal successfully with the surprises social play throws at him only if he has an essential self which is at ease with the roles he plays. To be at ease with the roles one plays one must have a core self which does not take the shape of these roles and is immune to collective perceptions. Role-playing is not incompatible with the idea of a core self; in fact, the play suggests that successful role-playing presupposes the existence of an 'essential' reality behind roles which change in accordance with the circumstances. Role-playing enhances identity because it allows one to avoid becoming enslaved by collective perceptions of oneself. As suggested by The Noble Gentleman and The Little French Lawyer, those who govern their lives by public opinion forfeit real identity. Manners which do not come from within result in the alienation of one's true self.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Little French Lawyer (1619)¹: Quarrelsome Gentility

A. Truth and the 'eye'

The play has received very little critical attention, either ignored or treated as an unsophisticated tribute to the gentlemen of the Blackfriars and elite practices like the duel. For Pearse, this is a play on chastity and vainglory, although 'neither chastity nor duelling are seriously discussed in the play'.² Barber regards the play as a comedy in which all characters take it for granted that duelling is a normal and indeed necessary part of the life of the upper classes and in which characters are divided into men worthy of honour and the group of 'Lackies,/ Peasants, and Tradesmen' to which the little French lawyer, La Writ, belongs and which is not worthy of the duel.³ Morsberger refers to The Little French Lawyer as simply a play which 'revolves around duelling'.⁴

Nevertheless, the play uses the duel in more complex ways than simply as an obvious class marker. The assumptions behind duelling are examined not just as subjective, class-specific constructions but in the light of ideals of polite conduct with an objective moral value. Like The Wild-Goose Chase, this play explores the relationship between fashionable manners and ideals of courtesy and decorum which, paradoxically, such manners breach rather than uphold.

In The Little French Lawyer the code of conduct under scrutiny is the duel and its relationship not only to conflicting views of honour but also of truth. The question when it was acceptable for a gentleman to fight was a controversial one in the period, not just in the play. Although the duel, or single combat, never reached in Britain the popularity that it had in France,⁵ where the play is enacted, Cleland does feel the need to provide advice on duels, 'seeing they are become so frequent and comon' (IYNM, p.232). In a period when there was, as in the play, little opportunity for actual warfare, the duel was one of the few opportunities where valour could be displayed. Authors unanimously agreed that a gentleman's valour should only be employed in the cause of his king and country, in other words for the public good (IYNM, p.234, EG, p.40). By contrast with mere quarrelsomeness, fortitude distinguished the grounds of quarrels and did not waste what was due to public or good causes for the sake of reputation.⁶

Despite these objections to duelling, controversy and equivocation were common, even in conservative authors like Brathwait, who, after severely castigating the practice, goes on to provide instructions on how to fight one, in the unlikely event that passion overcomes reason, because 'neither am I so stupid, as not to conceive how insupportable the burden of those wrongs is, which touch our name' (EG, p.208). Duelling also encouraged a false view of honour, identifying it with reputation and outward respectability, a view which seventeenth-century authors took

great pains to deny. In the sixteenth century, Ashley, in his work Of Honour, had described honour in terms of a desire for praise and with emphasis on the importance of the judgement of others.⁷ In the seventeenth century honour is inward, and conscience rather than reputation becomes its carrier. Cleland argues that the gentleman cannot be deprived of his honour by another man's word but only by his flight from virtue to embrace vice (IYNM, p.235). Brathwait agrees that 'no imputation can truly be said to staine a pure or undefiled soule, whose inward sinceritie (like a brazen Wall) beats backe all darts of envie or calumnie' (EG, p.43); the gentleman should not aim at the praise of men but rather that of God and the precepts of a good conscience (p.419). Duelling honour sidestepped moral considerations and required that a gentleman should support a cause whether it was right or wrong in order to be accounted honourable in the opinion of the world, even if he was not honest; an unknown author, writing around 1614, criticized the tendency of people to uphold a cause irrespective of its justice: 'thoughe he knowe in his owne conscience that the grounde is vniuste vppon w^{ch} he gaue the Lie, yet he must constantly mayntayne it, only because it came once out of his lippes, as thoughe those only weane the tounge infallible to trie vertues. For truth approued but not barely imagined must be the ground worke vppon w^{ch} honor buildes'.⁸

Another objection to duelling was that it went against justice, which involved giving every man his due (IYNM, p.164). Defined in this way,

justice was related to decorum, the ability to match one's behaviour to the circumstances or the person. Cleland defined decorum as modesty in all the words and actions of the gentleman, who should not dispute with every man upon every light subject, but 'in considering time, place, and persons, with whom he hath to doe, to answer soberlie'; one should express one's views with submission if the person is his superior in rank, age or learning because 'there is a Decorum to be obserued alwaies. Away with imperious, affirmatiue, and resolute words.' (IYNM, p.64).

It is precisely these delicate balances, between duelling and decorum, justice and courage, conscience and reputation, subjectivity and truth, that The Little French Lawyer attempts to chart. It is therefore unfair to treat the play as merely the registration of a class struggle for the appropriation of a coveted status symbol, as the criticism I quoted in the opening paragraph has treated it.

The opening scene delineates the gallants' own attitude to their fighting. They seem to be secure in the opinion that their conduct meets with the approval of their society, which does not expect them to curb their passions (6-11). To them, power is transgression rather than conformity. Duelling is paralleled to practices which replace the law (1.1.50-56), foreshadowing recurrent references in the play to what is 'lawfull' or 'lawlesse'. Dinant and Cleremont derive their sense of identity from their opposition to the Law or other characters and enjoy the fact that they participate in an extralegal upper-class practice (1.1.307-10). Their gentility

is essentialist; it relies on their blood, their predecessors, their honours (1.1.151-67). This means that they see themselves as being beyond the law and what they see as petty moral restrictions on their gentlemanly freedom; they are answerable to nothing but their own values. Dinant and Cleremont are not only opposed to the current values of 'Lackies, /Peasants, and Tradesmen' but also to past standards within their own class. Champernel deflates their complacency early in the opening scene by evoking a period when gentlemen were fighters: that of the Elizabethan privateering fleet which allowed a few well-born adventurers to search for glory and profit.⁹ Their insistence on fighting differentiates rather than binds them to the past of their class: they are 'unprofitable drones', unlike their ancestors who 'were gathering Bees, and fil'd their Hive, this Country, /With brave triumphant spoiles' (1.1.237-40). They are not cowards, but they do not have the previous generation's inclination for public-spirited activities, which conduct books regard as the only legitimate basis for the exercise of valour.

Paradoxically, although the gallants define their identity through difference and opposition, distinction necessitates identification with the ethics of a particular class; the duel offers them membership in an exclusive group (1.2.5-8). This is further suggested in the lengthy courtesies exchanged between the two sides when Beaupre delivers his challenge to Dinant (1.2.49-73). Cleremont's aside cues us as to how the courtesies should be read: as a thin veneer of deference concealing a

content of brutality. Duelling is really about cutting throats, even if this is done 'with complement,/ And such fine trickes as we doe' (1.2.75-76). The scene shifts the point of view from the ambiguous presentation of the gallants in 1.1 as idealistic, if misguided, young men to a new insight into their self-righteous and pharisaic aspects. Cleremont projects on Lamira the gallants' use of public discourses and codes in order to serve their individual interests (1.2.43-46). The forms and language of polite society become a cloak for self-seeking and animal impulses (1.2.39-40). As we shall see later, while conforming to the outward requirements of courtesy, the gallants violate universally binding values. The emphasis on formal correctness rather than the justice of one's cause is part of this concern with false honour, with which duelling is associated.

Like courtesy, duelling is an upper-class diversion without moral or social content. To Dinant and Cleremont, duelling is 'sport' (1.1.57, 1.2.1); they will fight for the sake of fighting, and if there is no just cause, they try to make one (1.1.58-59). We have already seen the association between gentility and an ethic of play and pleasure in The Wild-Goose Chase. This ethic of play and pleasure which the gallants uphold is contrasted with the obsession with profit and business associated with the lawyer, La Writ (2.1.73-76, 2.1.95-96, 2.1.122-23, 2.1.131-32, 2.3.46, 3.2.57-58). Significantly, when La Writ becomes possessed with the spirit of duelling, he, too, adopts the language of play (2.2.4, 3.2.51). Transgressions of the different moralities which are supposed to characterize different classes

can be found on both sides. Like La Writ, Cleremont has turned duelling into business (1.1.59). Lamira's father is also accused by the gallants of having betrayed the gentlemanly ethic. When Dinant and Cleremont confront him for having married his daughter off to an old and disabled man to avoid providing a dowry, their argument is that it is base for a gentleman to care about profit (1.1.161, 169-76); he has acted as if all other pleasures were servants to wealth (1.1.198).

After Scene 1.2 has exposed the gallants as self-seeking, 1.3 contrasts their view of honour as social esteem, honour in name, with Lamira's code of conduct, honour in substance, which privileges inward rules of decorum over the approbation of the 'giddy multitude' (1.3.65-74). The view of honour as social esteem, which duelling encourages, makes it possible for Dinant to become infuriated on hearing that Lamira's reputation has been tarnished by an unspecified culprit (1.3.84), a few lines after he has asked her to lose her honour in substance by sleeping with him. Scene 3.4 takes up the same theme of true versus false honour but this time as an epistemological question. Lamira and Champernel are wicked but only to Dinant; 'to the eye of Justice, streight as Truth' (3.4.53). To Dinant, moral values seem to be relative, subjugated to the individual subjectivity; to Lamira, they are absolute and objective. Dinant has a tendency to translate the world into his own terms, projecting his own concupiscence onto Lamira; what he sees, of course, is his own lasciviousness as reflected in Lamira's eyes (3.4.47). Subjectivity affects

the perception not only of lust but also of fear (3.4.72-76). The staged abduction allows the gallants to control truth and uphold a contextual view of virtue, which Lamira has rejected, by controlling both time and space and imposing their own subjective vision on reality. The performance aims to persuade Lamira that even her most cherished moral values are a matter of context (4.7.46-52). In the light of death, honour is not as important (5.1.51-52).

The trouble with this approach is that for truth to be truth, the 'eye' must be purified from desires and passions, and this is not the case with Dinant and La Writ, whose fighting is associated with habits which take away rational judgement, drinking and wenching (1.1.272-74, 3.2.43-44); and, to reinforce the connection, the cleansing of Dinant from his sensual side at the end of the play is followed by La Writ's declaration that his martial humour has been cured (5.2.1-3). La Writ has been 'metamorphis'd' (3.2.86) and no longer knows himself (3.2.2). His change is described as madness (3.2.19); Cleremont has previously described his anger in terms of madness (1.1.119). Anger does not only take away La Writ's self-knowledge; in the main plot, when Champernel gets angry, he states that he knows neither himself nor Lamira (1.1.233-34).

Even before the clash on truth between Lamira and Dinant in 3.4, the play has suggested in 2.1 that the truth about ourselves is not to be discovered through others. The man who lacks self-knowledge can easily be deluded by external approbation into believing himself to be something

that he is not. Cleremont convinces La Writ that he can fight by telling him that he can see his valour in his eye (2.1.104-106); Cleremont's remark is literally true, as the view of himself that La Writ takes to be the truth is really Cleremont's view, as reflected in his eye. Cleremont's solemn declaration that this was spoken 'like thy selfe' (2.1.114) when La Writ threatens to kill him is an ironical comment on his lack of self-knowledge, as the lawyer's self-concept is really a reflection of Cleremont's praise of his valour. La Writ no longer knows himself (3.2.1-2).

The purpose of the scene is to suggest that the mirror provided by external approbation is a talking one and does not always tell the truth. It is for this reason that truth cannot always be found in reputation, because, to return to the conduct books I mentioned earlier, the ground on which honour builds is 'truth approued', not 'barely imagined', and the tongue is not 'infallible to trie vertues'. The distorting powers of language are underlined from the beginning of the play through references to slander and tongues (1.1.226, 231, 262, 270). The noble conscience is autonomous and immune to the power of language but La Writ reiterates the truths Cleremont imposes on him; and he has stolen his courageous resolutions from plays (4.4.19-20). The implication of Lamira's insistence that her husband should trust her and place no guards upon her but her own conscience is the autonomy and unpredictability without which true honour cannot exist; only false honour/reputation depends on authorities extraneous to the internal logic of the conscience (3.1.93-101). The duel is

based on the belief that truth, in this case the truth about gentility, is inscribed on the body and is not a matter of language; one must act, not speak (2.1.14, 2.3.88-89, 3.1.20-23). When still a coward, La Writ is very talkative, but when he turns into a gentleman he begins to hate words (3.2.76-80, 93, 4.4.33-34). In 4.6 La Writ is led back into self-knowledge through Champernel's beating; on seeing his blood, he professes himself 'patient' and realizes that he is a coward (171-76); the body is reinstated as the medium of truth.

B. Codes and Courtesy

What Scene 2.1, which I have just analysed, does, then, is to reinforce the argument of the main plot that the eye has a tendency to deceive itself, by taking the reflections of its own prejudices to be the truth and by crystallizing these reflections into rigid codes; and the question how codified or how unrestrained behaviour should be is central to the play. The gallants see all law and morality as by definition entailing restriction. On the other hand, they consciously attach themselves to their social class and shape their identities through it, as evident in their conformity to the language of courtesy. This rigid attachment to prefabricated patterns of behaviour creates the restrictive habits of perception that are seen in both Dinant and La Writ, who recognize no truth but that of the subjective perception of their eye. This rigidity can be seen in the fact that no one, it seems, would expect the gallants to change their character and become more temperate (1.2.57-60, 3.1.57-58, 3.1.59-61). Their most prominent character trait is their strong resolution (1.2.84); and their rejection of the law in the opening scene is related to this. Legal authority relies on rationality and rules which have a public, objective validity above the assertion of any individual will. For Lamira's absolute truth, 'the eye of Justice', Dinant and La Writ substitute the individual will/subjectivity; there is nothing good or bad in itself. It is this strong will which insists on seeing

others as subject to the gallants' formulaic and therefore distorting 'eye'. Dinant displays the same tendency for codification in both his social and personal life, mirrored in the secondary plot in La Writ's rigidity and reductive attitude to the duelling code.

This tendency to codify all behaviour and experience in accordance with the dictates of subjective perceptions produces an emphasis on role-playing (2.3.180, 194, 202); conversely, believing in the existence of a single truth is incompatible with dissimulation (1.3.35-38). The elaborate ceremonial of the duel with its ritual of challenge and reply is part of an element of deliberate make-believe with which the gallants' fighting is associated. Even intimate relationships are role-centred, and perhaps the only difference La Writ has from the upper-class characters is overacting his role. Dinant's courtship of Lamira typifies this tendency of relationships in the play to be built around roles. Lamira is to him a Petrarchan mistress with power over her lover or a lustful wife, but never an individual with a personality; he can only think of her in terms of stereotypes of femininity. In 1.3 it is obvious that Lamira takes advantage of Dinant's tendency to think of their relationship in terms of roles, with Lamira cast as a Petrarchan mistress and himself as a chivalric lover, in order to convince him to defend her reputation instead of fighting with her brother (49-55, 94-96).

Because Dinant's view of Lamira revolves around roles, it wavers between the heavenly, regal figure which inspires him to perform outstanding feats of valour and a crude sexual fantasy which can be

ennobled only by the male imagination into the former; Cleremont accuses his friend of making 'a goddess of a Puppet' (1.1.111). Dinant mistakes, as an angry duellist, the nature of honour but also, as a sensual lover, the nature of Lamira. The sensual lover can be deceived into thinking of a woman as a goddess because he follows the dictates of his senses rather than his rational judgement. Dinant has no control over his feelings for Lamira; he describes her in terms of torment and bondage (1.1.185-86, 2.3.147-48) and there are several references to her power over him (1.3.26-29, 1.3.46-48, 2.3.13-14, 3.1.78-80). Sensual love, like angry valour, can focus on any object and easily transform it.

The excessive codification of conduct and experience, seen in the emphasis on formal correctness associated with the duel and in the role-centredness of relationships, dispenses with moral discrimination. The imperatives in Dinant's code of honour are absolute and uncompromising; it comes before love for a woman, justice, friendship and even life itself. This lack of moral discrimination is associated with madness (3.2.115) and links Dinant with La Writ. When La Writ turns into a duellist, he goes mad and quarrels with everyone without discrimination (3.2.19-24); his valour is 'senselesse fire' (3.2.178). Similarly, Dinant is so eager to fight that he will even fight with his own shadow (2.3.32). La Writ's lack of moral discrimination results in a breach of decorum in 3.2 when he decides to send a challenge to the judge, an old man (104-14); this discrimination, the 'faire bearing' which is the pride and glory of a gentleman (3.2.140) the

gallants claim to possess, although it is restricted to the forms of courtesy rather than its content (3.2.143-44). Duelling should be combined with the ability to give everyone their due, which, as noted in the opening pages of this chapter, conduct book authors regarded as the essence of justice and decorum. Without it, duelling becomes killing, and La Writ's duelling is described as such (4.4.9-10, 17, 35).

The distinction between duelling and killing, 'lawfull' and 'lawlesse' fighting is in the courtesy and decorum, found in the former only. In the final performance, the gallants are associated with the thieves in being 'lawlesse' (5.1.58) and these references are part of the play's pervasive concern with what is 'lawfull' or not (1.1.159, 1.1.214, 1.1.307-10, 1.3.34). The lawless force of thieves is incompatible with courtesy (5.3.31-34); the thieves are, of course, gentlemen in reality, and the association of Dinant with the thieves underlines the fact that all forms of fighting which are not combined with courtesy, decorum and justice are 'lawlesse'.

This moral discrimination that is the basis of courtesy includes not only the ability to adjust one's behaviour in accordance with the person one deals with but also the ability to weigh the circumstances and adjust one's reactions to them. Codified conduct results in minds incapable of dealing with unforeseen circumstances. Throughout the play, unforeseen circumstances frustrate the insistence of characters on strict rules. Scrupulous conformity to the ritual of duelling does not ensure success; and neither does the justice of one's cause, as the outcome of duels is not

ruled by Providence in the play. Champernel finds that fortune frustrates his family's defence of a very just cause (2.2.20-21, 35). Valour must cooperate successfully with the circumstances. This unpredictability is essential for honour because valour is tried by the exigencies fortune throws at it.

A predictable, staged outcome turns duelling into play. The judge so arranges things as to transform the lawyer's fighting into an elaborate performance which will amuse him; it will involve strict adherence to all the nice points of duelling etiquette but it will only be a game without bloodshed. La Writ's fighting will be 'sport' without wounds (3.2.188-89). He can only play at being a duellist; true duelling involves blood, but he can only fight without blood, as it emerges in 4.6. Scene 3.2 is not the only point in the play where formality is diverted into ridiculous behaviour. In 3.3 Lamira insists on superimposing strict courting protocol despite the fact that it is absurd in that context, reducing Dinant's great expectations to a pointless ritual; Cleremont has previously urged his friend to play the man with her (2.3.202), and Dinant ends up doing just that, playing a role only. Ultimately, just as La Writ's fighting is just killing, despite the polite forms, Dinant's courtship is just 'fumbling' (3.3.132) and 'rutting' (3.4.65).

The night scene shows the gallants to be discomfited by the unpredictable circumstances they face and become acquainted with fear. The play has previously suggested the vulnerability behind the quarrelsome and assertive gentility of its characters. Their culture has

equipped them to deal with experience in physical terms, and when it is not possible for them to do so they collapse into insignificance. Champernel is reduced to weeping in the opening scene, after finding that he is no longer able to use his sword to revenge the insults (290-300). In a duel, one is prepared for fighting (1.2.15-19); but in the night scene Dinant is bewildered when he cannot use his sword and wishes for 'two-edg'd words' (3.4.38). Both La Writ and Sampson and the gallants suffer a humiliating disarmament which proves that they lack the ability to adjust their actions to different circumstances; their valour operates only within the specific context of a sword-fight. In 4.6 Sampson is discomfited when Champernel strikes La Writ; without a sword, he is a coward (148-49). Sampson sums up the moral of the play in his remark 'adversity tries valour' (155), as he leaves La Writ to fend for himself and flees to safety. La Writ's quarrelsomeness has never been true valour because it stemmed from the favour of the circumstances and not from his own natural disposition.

The unpredictability which serves as the testing ground for true valour also forms the basis of courtesy. The difference between the gentleman's ethic of courtesy and moral obligation and the lawyer's ethic of exchange is that the former relies on spontaneity and unpredictability for its operation, whereas the latter relies on an attempt to control the outcome. Even when La Writ takes to fighting, he can only conceptualize it in his own mercenary terms, those of exchange, business and self-interest, turning duelling into 'a new trade of living' (3.2.58).¹⁰ La Writ, although no

gentleman, can do 'most like a gentleman' (2.2.33) and offer Cleremont the 'great courtesie' (2.2.41) he needs by acting as his second, but his subsequent behaviour suggests that this was not in fact courtesy. Instead of offering freely, he requires recompense from Cleremont for the service he offered him (3.2.98) and tries to persuade him to deliver the challenge by invoking the obligations of friendship (3.2.124). The gallants, who in the opening scene disclaim the mercenary ethic as plebeian, are later shown to be part of it, as the ability to give freely gradually extends to include not just material things but also courtesy and mercy; it is the ability to offer these freely which duelling contradicts.

The play examines the social and personal relations organized around such terms as office, reward, service, duty (2.3.90-93, 3.1.80-81, 3.2.94, 3.2.124, 3.3.16-17, 4.7.35, 5.1.168-69). These terms create linguistic parallels between characters in both plots which contradict the claims of the gallants to be free from the mercenary ethic unworthy of gentlemen. Dinant equates himself with La Writ in expecting Lamira to reward him with promises of sexual favours. The cause of his complaint in the opening scene is that his courtship of Lamira was not rewarded with marriage; their relationship is described in terms of 'recompence' (1.1.112) and Lamira is ungrateful because she did not reciprocate his presents, courtship and 'slave-like services' (1.1.102). Dinant was chivalrous to Lamira before she got married because 'hope was left then/ Of recompence' (1.3.44-45). The sensual lover offends against courtesy

because he lives in constant anticipation of the reward his beloved could offer at any time. Vows and promises, which Dinant asks of Lamira, are incompatible with courtesy because they try to control the unpredictability of life without which honour and courtesy cannot exist; the gentleman offers his service freely, irrespective of what the outcome will be. Promises are incompatible with the ethic of giving freely (5.1.219-20). Asking for a reward is against courtesy because 'thanks but takes away/ From what was freely purpos'd' (5.1.193-94). The ethic of sexual exchange that Dinant upholds has the approval of Lamira's nurse; because Dinant is a liberal lover, Lamira should be more cooperative (3.3.1-7).

The final scene allows the gallants to display their magnanimity and courteous disposition; but the staged context contradicts the unpredictability upon which courtesy depends. Throughout the play, Dinant has been feeling that chastity is the source of Lamira's power and pride. The final scene allows him to construct a situation in which she becomes his suppliant and exposes a need for control, of people and circumstances, which is incompatible with courtesy. Dinant wishes to be the mastermind of life and subjugate all to his own dramaturgy (5.1.237-72); but courtesy consists in giving freely, despite having the power to do otherwise (5.3.31-34). In 4.3 Dinant was forced to act in the play set up by Lamira (4-8); now he reverses the situation by setting up his own performance, by which he gets so carried away he almost ends up

believing it (5.1.187-92). A desire to control the context of one's actions is incompatible with courtesy.

It is this ethic of giving freely which duelling contradicts because it encourages a retributive attitude to justice and precludes mercy. Scene 4.2 defines the relationship between civility and physical valour by drawing parallels between the gallants in the main plot and La Writ and Sampson in the secondary one. Duelling is differentiated from lawless force in that it involves a proper understanding of one's cause and carriage (4.2.4). The right 'carriage' in duelling, however, is not a matter of complying with its intricate ceremonial, as Sampson and La Writ think, but the ability to temper punctiliousness with mercy (4.2.10-16, 4.4.21-23). Sampson's idea of honour is retributive and appropriately described in the language of debt (4.2.14). The same is true of La Writ, whose exactitude prohibits mercy: 'for every Cause a cousin' (4.4.10-11). Duelling which is vindictive is killing (4.4.16-18, 35). By contrast, Lamira's relatives never seek revenge through blood, they just make the gallants suffer a humiliating disarmament, similar to the one La Writ and Sampson suffer in 4.4; and in 4.6 the purpose of Champernel's beating is not to kill La Writ but to make him 'understand' (176).

As the last work in the thesis, The Little French Lawyer sums up many of the ideas seen in previous plays, especially in its concern with the elusive nature of public constructions of the selfhood of gentility. The Knight of Malta, The Humorous Lieutenant, The Nice Valour and The

Noble Gentleman are also concerned with the relations between sense perceptions and reality and their implications for issues of status. Sometimes, as in The Knight of Malta, the relations between sense perceptions and reality are dramatized at the level not only of gentility but also of sexual fidelity. Truth can be discovered by a subjectivity, a perceiving eye which is free from passions that might affect rational judgement. The eye whose judgement has been impaired by passions has a tendency to mistake its representations for reality, to translate the world of the other into the terms of the self and project its passions onto others. This is often seen in the image of the self being mirrored in the eyes of the other person and acquiring a self-concept in this way and the fact that men accuse women of vices which are really a projection of their own on them.

The Little French Lawyer is not a play against duelling; the argument for mercy which it postulates is also used by cowards (2.1.39-41). It rather shows that distinctions between different ranks cannot always be found in symbols and codes of conduct but rather in the inward truths these are meant to represent. As a result, the polite manners of fashionable society should be evaluated not as refined representations of subjective wills but in accordance with their conformity to universal truths. The separation of codes of conduct from the precepts of the conscience results, as in The Noble Gentleman and The Wild-Goose Chase, in absurdity, lack of self-knowledge and an emphasis on the performative aspects of status. Those who rely on others for their perception of

themselves lack self-knowledge. Truth about status is inscribed on the body and is not a matter of language or subjectivity; this is also seen in The Knight of Malta, The Nice Valour, The Noble Gentleman and The Elder Brother.

The ability to control social play and represent oneself as a leading character while casting others into secondary roles is a measure of the success of one's role-playing and a mark of status. Like Marine in The Noble Gentleman, Valentine's followers in Wit without Money and Mirabel's friends in The Wild-Goose Chase, La Writ plays roles that have already been scripted for him. The Humorous Lieutenant, The Noble Gentleman, The Wild-Goose Chase and The Little French Lawyer suggest that actions are meaningful only if the doer has himself decided to do what he does; otherwise the actions are meaningless and social and personal relationships become absurd. The social climber can only imitate compulsively a single external mark of status but cannot acquire the gentleman's consciousness; his compulsive role-playing betrays his unease. The ideal of polite manners which the play endorses is similar to that in The Wild-Goose Chase, namely the ability to match one's behaviour to the person and the circumstances; in both plays, a lack of adaptability results in breaches of decorum. The two plays also share an emphasis on the right balance between play and seriousness. The Little French Lawyer suggests that duelling should be neither 'sport' nor 'business'.

Conclusion

Gentility in the plays we have examined is formulated in relation to two main influences: political authority and the social reality. Regarding the former, the plays register an anxiety about the monarch's claims to control over social distinctions. In this case gentility is not only treated as a social category but becomes a subversive political discourse. In the case of the social reality, there is a reiterated fear of a hiatus between symbols and what they signify and between different subjectivities and an objective truth about social value. At a time when the external marks of status were becoming increasingly unreliable and substantive categories were replaced by or confused with superficial ones, the plays enact fantasies in which there is no disjunction between style and substance. The mistrust of appearances is related to a desire for a truth which can be located in the body, gentility which can be empirically tried and proved - and therefore not susceptible to the subjectivism of the perceiving eye or the deceptiveness of appearances.

Although the body often becomes the medium of truth, gentility is a state of mind, a mode of awareness. The closing in on the self often suggests a conflict between gentry values and a court life which discourages the cultivation of the inner life for the sake of unquestioning obedience. The emphasis on the external marks of identity, not only at court but also in the society of fashion, results in a need to redress the

balance by associating status with judgement, knowledge, self-knowledge, the existence of an inner life. Gentility is the ability to remain constant to one's self, in court life by refusing to play roles; in town life by maintaining a core self despite playing roles. If gentility is not a form of awareness social order is abolished because differences between different levels of society, including royal authority, are shown to be superficial rather than substantive. Status which does not rely on inwardness is theatrical or absurd. Gentility is associated with the possession of an essential self and a unified consciousness; those who lack it are either empty or possess a dislocated subjectivity which manifests itself in their self-division.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare, p.256.
2. Jonathan Dollimore, Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries, p.29.
3. *ibid*, p.34.
4. *ibid*, pp. 178 & 237.
5. *ibid*, p.256.
6. *ibid*, p.256.
7. The Seventeenth Century Resolve: A Historical Anthology of a Literary Form, edited by John L. Lievsay, p.38.
8. Andrew Gurr, Playgoing in Shakespeare's London, p.69.
9. *ibid*, p.73.
10. E. Samson, 'Definitions of Gentility in Jacobean and Caroline London Comedy', Univ. of Cambridge M.Litt 1990, p.34.
11. Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century, ed. Roberta F. Brinkley, p.655; J. Danby, Poets on Fortune's Hill, p.157.
12. Lawrence B. Wallis, Beaumont and Fletcher: Entertainers to the Jacobean Gentry; Philip J. Finkelpearl, Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher; Gordon McMullan, The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher.
13. Eugene M. Waith, The Pattern of Tragicomedy in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, p.42.
14. Nancy Cotton Pearse, John Fletcher's Chastity Plays: Mirrors of Modesty, p.185.
15. Philip J. Finkelpearl, Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, p.7.
16. Sandra Clark, The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation, p.44.
17. *ibid*, p.46.
18. Gordon McMullan, The Politics of Unease in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, p.35.
19. *ibid*, his study of the play is found in pages 71-84. Quotations are on pages 79-80.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Paul. D. Green, 'Theme and Structure in Fletcher's Bonduca', Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 22(1982), p.305.
2. *ibid*, pp. 305 & 308.
3. Andrew Hickman, 'Bonduca's Two Ignoble Armies and The Two Noble Kinsmen', Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England, 4(1988), p.167.

4. *ibid*, p.144.
5. *ibid*, p.167.
6. Green, p.305.
7. Marco Mincoff, 'Fletcher's Early Tragedies', Renaissance Drama, 7(1964), p.86.
8. Anthony Esler, The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation, pp.94-96.
9. Sir Thomas Elyot, The Boke Named the Gouernour, ed. H.H.S. Croft, II, p.288.
10. Francis Markham, The Booke of Honour, p.2.
11. Anthony Stafford, The Guide of Honour, pp.80-81.
12. W.W. Appleton, Beaumont and Fletcher: A Critical Study, p.55.
13. Again, when fortune smiles and the stream of life flows according to our wishes, let us diligently avoid all arrogance, haughtiness and pride. For it is as much a sign of weakness to give way to one's feelings in success as it is in adversity. But it is a fine thing to keep an unruffled temper, an unchanging mien, and the same cast of countenance in every condition of life (Cicero, De Officiis, I.XXVI). Men, who through prosperity have become restive and over self-confident, ought to be put into the training-ring, so to speak, of reason and learning, that they may be brought to comprehend the frailty of human affairs and the fickleness of fortune (De Officiis, I.XXVI). Pampered bodies grow sluggish through sloth; not work but movement and their own weight exhausts them. Prosperity unbruised cannot endure a single blow, but a man who has been at constant feud with misfortunes acquires a skin calloused by suffering ('On Providence', The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca, ed. Moses Hadas, pp.30-31).
14. Cicero, De Officiis, I.XLIII.
15. For Seneca, the pride of great fortune is pernicious folly: 'Fortune converts benefits into injuries' (On Benefits, trans. Thomas Lodge). Fortune corrupts one's mind (I.XIII). Avoid luxury, debilitating prosperity, which makes men's minds soggy and which, unless something intervenes to remind them of the human condition, renders them comatose as in unending inebriation ('On Providence', ed. Hadas, p.38).
16. Seneca in Moral Essays, I, argues that 'the wise man can lose nothing. He has invested everything in himself, he trusts nothing to fortune, his own goods are secure, since he is content with virtue, which needs no gift from chance' (p.61).
17. Ben Jonson, Sejanus his Fall, ed. W.F. Bond, p.xviii.
18. Machiavelli, (The Prince, chapter 25) suggests that no man is found so prudent as to
 know how to adapt himself to these changes, both because he cannot deviate from the course to which nature inclines him, and because, having always prospered while adhering to one path, he cannot always be persuaded that it would be well for

him to forsake it. And so when occasion demands the cautious man to act impetuously, he cannot do so and is undone: whereas, had he changed his nature with time and circumstances, his fortune would have been unchanged.

19. The aim of suicide, according to Seneca is to 'wrench free of Fortune with the greatest expedition' ('Letters', 70, ed. Hadas, p.204).
20. See also page 38.
21. Matthew N. Proser, The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies, pp.93-94.
22. Green, p.313.
23. Jonathan Goldberg, James I and the Politics of Literature, p.165.
24. Seneca argues that no evil can befall a good man because he is 'more potent than the world without' ('On Providence', ed. Hadas, p.29).
25. Katharine Eisaman Maus, Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind, p.37.
26. *ibid*, pp.16-17.
27. Audrey Chew, Stoicism in Renaissance English Literature: An Introduction, p.73.
28. Oscar James Campbell, 'The Salvation of Lear', English Literary History, 15(1948), p.105. It should also be noted that Seneca condemns flattery as the ruin of greatness (On Benefits, V.XXXI); the Stoic advisor will always tell the truth when no one dares do that. For Epictetus, the wise man is not emotionally committed to those whom he serves. He is by nature only able to be committed to himself. When he works for others in the right way, he is merely appropriating (or attaching) the needs of others for his own 'higher' needs. There is only one canon by which the wise man is able to judge his own behaviour: is it conducive to my own virtue, or does it risk compromising the valuable self which it is my prerogative to preserve? (J. M. Rist, Stoic Philosophy, p.265).
29. Seneca, Moral Essays, I, p.135.
30. *ibid*, p.137.
31. Robert S. Miola, Shakespeare's Rome, p.194.
32. Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, V, p.506.
33. Eugene M. Waith, The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher, p.122.
34. Green, p.314.
35. *ibid*, p.313.
36. Proser, p.8.
37. Clifford Leech, The John Fletcher Plays, pp.166-67.
38. Andrew Gurr, Playgoing in Shakespeare's London, pp.132-36.
39. Green, p.305.
40. D.H. Willson, King James VI and I, p.273.
41. Unimpaired prosperity cannot withstand a single blow (Moral Essays, I, p.11). Luxury and good fortune are enfeebling (p.29).

42. R. Malcolm Smuts, Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England, p.76.
43. The Political Works of James I, ed. H. Mcllwain, p.12.
44. *ibid*, p.28.
45. *ibid*, p.28.
46. *ibid*, p.15.
47. *ibid*, pp.41-42.
48. *ibid*, p.29.
49. Lindsay Boynton, The Elizabethan Militia 1558-1638, p.212.
50. Smuts, p.26.
51. The Political Works of James I, ed. Mcllwain, p.29.
52. S. R. Gardiner, A History of England, 1603-42, II, p.165.
53. G. Davies, The Early Stuarts, p.156.
54. The Political Works of James I, ed. Mcllwain, p.8.
55. Sandra Clark, The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation, p.87.
56. Hickman, p.143.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Using linguistic criteria, Cyrus Hoy has assigned the shares of Fletcher, Field and Massinger as follows: Fletcher: Act 2; Act 3, scenes 1 and 4; Act 4, scene 2. Nathan Field: Act 1 and Act 5. Massinger: Act 3, scenes 2 and 3; Act 4, scenes 1, 3 and 4 ('The Shares of Fletcher and his Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon', Studies in Bibliography, 12(1959), pp.97-98.
2. Mary Beth Rose, The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in Renaissance Drama, pp.228-30.
3. The Political Works of James I, p.270.
4. *ibid*, p.273.
5. John Nichols, Progresses of James I, 3 vols, I, pp. 8, 121, 237.
6. Secret History of the Court of James I, I, pp.195-96.
7. John Selden, Titles of Honour, p.855.
8. Philip J. Finkelpearl, Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, p.90.
9. Thomas Cogswell, 'England and the Spanish Match', in Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-42, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes, p.120.
10. R. Malcolm Smuts, Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England, p.20.
11. *ibid*, p.23.
12. Roy Strong, Henry Prince of Wales, p.80.
13. *ibid*, p.86.
14. Memoirs of the Peers of England During the Reign of James I, 2 vols, I, p.xxix.
15. Sir Thomas Smith, De Republica Anglorum, ed. Mary Dewar, p.71.

16. *ibid*, p.72.
17. John Selden, Table-Talk, p.52.
18. Philip J. Finkelpearl, 'John Fletcher as Spenserian Playwright: The Faithful Shepherdess and The Island Princess', Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 27(1987), p.299.
19. Jean E. Howard, The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England, p.56.
20. Nancy Cotton Pearse, John Fletcher's Chastity Plays: Mirrors of Modesty, p.185.
21. Sir Philip Sidney, A Defence of Poetry, ed. J.A. van Dorsten, p.40.
22. John S. Wilks, The Idea of Conscience in Renaissance Tragedy, p.31.
23. Graham Parry, The Seventeenth Century, p.193.
24. Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, p.31.
25. Rose, p.229.
26. *ibid*, p.229.
27. Jill Mann, 'Malory: Knightly Combat in Le Morte D' Arthur', in The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, ed. Boris Ford, I, p.334.
28. *ibid*, p.338.
29. I am indebted to Bembo's description of Platonic love in Book 4 of Castiglione's Courtier.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Gordon McMullan, The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher, pp.172-74.
2. A Critical Edition of John Fletcher's 'The Humorous Lieutenant', Philip Oxley, pp.44-62.
3. Richard Blau, 'The Absolved Riddle: Sovereign Pleasure and the Baroque Subject in the Tragicomedies of John Fletcher', New Literary History, 17(1986), p.544.
4. Clifford Leech, The John Fletcher Plays, p.70.
5. Theodore B. Leinwand, The City Staged: Jacobean City Comedy 1603-13, p.87.
6. *ibid*, p.86.
7. Baldesar Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, Penguin Classics, Book 2, p.115.
8. Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare, p.162.
9. Frank Whigham, Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory, pp.38-39.
10. William Hazlitt, Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, p.55.
11. *ibid*, p.56.
12. Wyndham Lewis, The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare, p.219.
13. Stephen Knight, Arthurian Literature and Society, p.76.

14. C. Stephen Jaeger, The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210, p.241.
15. Greenblatt, pp.164-65.
16. *ibid*, p.158.
17. R.N. Cordner, 'The New Inn in Context: Ben Jonson's Play for 1628-29', unpublished doctoral dissertation, Univ. of York 1990, p.148.
18. *ibid*, p.151.
19. Aristotle, Ethics, trans. J.A.K. Thomson, pp.156-57.
20. *ibid*, p.157.
21. Anthony Esler, The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation, p.92, p.94.
22. Lorraine Helms, "Still Wars and Lechery": Shakespeare and the Last Trojan Woman', in Arms and the Woman, ed. Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Auslander Munich and Susan Merrill Squier, p.26.
23. The Spectator, ed. W.F. Bond, no.266 (4 Jan, 1712).

CHAPTER FOUR

1. The play has often been assigned to Middleton but all commentators have retained their reservations about accepting the play as substantially Middleton's. The arguments in favour of a Fletcherian authorship are those of characterization and plot; F.T. Bowers finds 1.1 'very Fletcherian' and the character of Shamont in that scene a typical 'Fletcherian device', as mentioned in the introduction to the CUP edition of the play. Those who support the possibility of the play as being Middleton's adduce linguistic evidence (Macd. P. Jackson, Studies in Attribution: Middleton and Shakespeare, pp.141-42; Cyrus Hoy, 'The Shares of Fletcher and his Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon' Studies in Bibliography, 13(1960), pp.92-96. Oliphant has explained the discrepancy between style and content by a theory of revision (The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: An Attempt to Determine their Respective Shares and the Shares of Others, pp.439-50).
2. The Political Works of James I, ed. H. McIlwain, pp.307-308.
3. Ruth Kelso, The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century, p.20.
4. Norbert Elias, The Court Society, p.68.
5. Anthony Esler, The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation, p.107.
6. F.T. Bowers, Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, p.281.
7. Wyndham Lewis, The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare, p.215.
8. John Alvis, 'The Coherence of Shakespeare's Roman Plays', Modern Language Quarterly, 40(1979), p.132.
9. James Spedding et al, The Works of Francis Bacon, 14 vols, VI, p.398.
10. Thomas M. Greene, 'Ben Jonson and the Centered Self', Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 10(1970), p.331.

11. C. Stephen Jaeger, The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210, p.15.
12. Anthony Esler, The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation, p.114.
13. *ibid*, p.116.
14. *ibid*, p.116.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Hoy attributes Acts 1 and 5 to Massinger, Act 2 to Fletcher and Acts 3 and 4 to Field ('The Shares of Fletcher and his Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon', Studies in Bibliography, 12(1959), pp.98-100). As Hoy points out, Massinger in this play and The Elder Brother seems to have been employed for the express purpose of setting a play in motion, and providing it with a finale ('Massinger as Collaborator: The Plays with Fletcher and Others', in Philip Massinger: A Critical Reassessment, ed. Douglas Howard, pp.52-53).
2. Suzanne Gossett, 'Best Men are Molded out of Faults': Marrying the Rapist in Jacobean Drama' in Renaissance Historicism: Selections from 'English Literary Renaissance', p.168.
3. Robert Ashton, James I by his Contemporaries, p.114.
4. *ibid*, p.7.
5. *ibid*, p.232.
6. Nugae Antiquae, ed. Henry Harington and Thomas Park, I, pp. 348-54.
7. *ibid*, pp.351-52.
8. Anne Barton, Ben Jonson, Dramatist, p.307.
9. Sir Walter Raleigh, The History of the World, ed. C.A. Patrides, p.80.
10. *ibid*, p.18.
11. David M. Bergeron, Royal Family, Royal Lovers, p.166.
12. Joel Hurstfield, Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England, p.153.
13. G.P.V. Akrigg, Jacobean Pageant, pp.227-28.
14. Nugae Antiquae, I, p.395.
15. *ibid*, p.356.
16. The Political Works of James I, ed. McIlwain, p.39.
17. Arthur B. Ferguson, The Chivalric Tradition, p.110.
18. Castiglione, The Courtier, Book 4, p.284.
19. *ibid*, p.284.
20. Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth Century England, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Stephen N. Zwicker, p.7.
21. Cicero, De Officiis, I.XXVII.
22. The Reign of James VI and I, ed. Alan G.R. Smith, p.156.
23. Linda Levy Peck, "For a King not to be bountiful were a fault": Perspectives in Court Patronage in Early Stuart England', Journal of British Studies, 25(1986), p.36.
24. Cicero, I.VII.

25. Peck, pp.59-60.

26. *ibid*, p.35.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Cyrus Hoy points out that Massinger seems to have been employed for the express purpose of setting the play in motion and providing it with a finale (Acts 1 and 5) in this play and The Queen of Corinth ('Massinger as Collaborator: The Plays with Fletcher and Others', in Philip Massinger: A Critical Reassessment, ed. Douglas Howard, pp.52-53). This opinion is accepted by Fredson Bowers in the CUP edition of the play.
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3. James Mervyn, English Politics and the Concept of Honour 1485-1642, Past and Present, 1978, supplement 3, p.85.
4. Anne Barton, Ben Jonson, Dramatist, p.317.
5. George C. Brauer, The Education of a Gentleman: Theories of Gentlemanly Education in England, 1660-1775, p.58.
6. Keith Wrightson, English Society 1580-1680, p.185.
7. Joan Wildeblood and Peter Brinson, The Polite World: A Guide to English Manners and Deportment from the Thirteenth to the Nineteenth Century, p.22.
8. Mark H. Curtis, 'The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England', Past and Present, 23 (1962), p.39.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Hoy supports the following division of labour: Beaumont: 1.4, 2.2, 3.1&3-4, 4.3-5. Beaumont and Fletcher: 1.1-3, 2.1, 3.2, 4.1-2&5. He considers the extant text of the play to represent Fletcher's revision of an early work of Beaumont's sole authorship. He specifies as the work of Beaumont and Fletcher those scenes in which the Fletcherian revisions seem to have been most extensive ('The Shares of Fletcher and his Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon', Studies in Bibliography, 11(1958), pp.94-95).
2. Eugene Ionesco, Notes and Counternotes, trans. Donald Watson, p.67.
3. *ibid*, p.157.
4. *ibid*, pp.186-87.
5. 1.1.109, 1.1.132-33, 1.1.177, 1.1.185, 1.3.5, 2.1.55, 2.1.190, 2.1.194, 2.1.214, 2.1.214, 2.2.43, 2.2.59, 2.2.61, 2.2.92, 2.2.211, 3.1.62, 3.1.75, 3.4.12, 3.4.43, 3.4.59, 3.4.143, 4.3.86, 4.3.99, 4.4.16, 5.1.104, 5.1.189. See also page 16.
6. All references are from The Balcony, Jean Genet, trans. Barbara Wright and Terry Hands.
7. *ibid*, p.xii.
8. Martin Butler, Theatre and Crisis, 1632-42, p.325, n.29.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Hoy has suggested the following division of labour: Beaumont: Act 1, Scene 1, Act 2, Scene 1, Act 5, Scene 2. Beaumont and Fletcher: Act 1, Scene 2; Act 2, Scenes 2-3; Act 3; Act 4; Act 5, Scenes 1,3, and 4. He believes that though Beaumont's share in the actual authorship of the play is decidedly subordinate to Fletcher's, there is no doubt that he is responsible for the final form of the extant text ('The Shares of Fletcher and his Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon', Studies in Bibliography, 11 (1958), p.96).
2. Philip J. Finkelpearl, Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, p.123.
3. *ibid*, p.122.
4. *ibid*, p.116.
5. *ibid*, p.119.
6. *ibid*, p.121.
7. *ibid*, p.124.
8. The issue of language is also discussed in Section C.
9. William R. Dynes, 'The Trickster Figure in Jacobean City Comedy', Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 33(1993), p.370.
10. R.B. Parker, 'Middleton's Experiments with Comedy and Judgement', in Jacobean Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, p.191.
11. Finkelpearl, p.124.
12. James I, A Counterblaste to Tobacco, ed. Edward Arber, p.110.
13. Finkelpearl, p.123.
14. *ibid*, p.121.
15. *ibid*, p.117.

CHAPTER NINE

1. All investigators are agreed in giving the play to Fletcher, despite the first quarto's attribution to Beaumont as well because, as Oliphant notes, more importance may be attached to the Stationer's Register entry of the play in March, 1636-37 as Fletcher's (The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: An Attempt to Determine their Respective Shares and the Shares of Others, pp.150-51)
2. Theodore Leinwand, The City Staged: Jacobean City Comedy, 1603-13, p.97.
3. Robert Ashley, Of Honour, p.57.
4. Lawrence Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy, pp.42-43.
5. *ibid*, p.43.
6. Stuart Royal Proclamations, ed. James F. Larkin et al, I. The quotations are on pages 22 and 356-57 respectively.
7. Emrys Jones, 'The First West End Comedy', Proceedings of the British Academy, 60(1982), p.248.

8. In conduct books a lot of effort was devoted to striking a delicate balance between the Aristotelian magnanimous man's consciousness of superiority and the Christian emphasis on humility. Cleland, in addressing the parents of the young gentleman, advises them to 'embolden him against a foolish shamefastnes in hanging downe of his head, and blushing at everie light word, which maketh him astonished at euery graue countenance and sharp word that is spoken' (IYNM, p.65). Brathwait praises 'humilitie' and 'affabilitie' but seems to expect resistance from his readership (EG, pp.9-10). Henry Tubbe states that 'too much modesty intangles the soule with many impediments' (John L. Lievsay, The Seventeenth Century Resolve: A Historical Anthology of a Literary Form, p.172).
9. Jonathan Dollimore, Radical Tagedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries, pp.xxxv-xxxvi.
10. Cyrus Hoy, 'Fletcherian Romantic Comedy', Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama, 27(1984), p.9.
11. *ibid*, p.9.
12. Karen Newman, 'City Talk: Women and Commodification in Jonson's Epicoene', A Journal of English Literary History, 56(1989), p.506.
13. *ibid*, p.507.
14. Sandra Clark, The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation, p.140.
15. *ibid*, pp.140 & 142.
16. *ibid*, p.142.
17. Conduct-book theory excludes the Lady from the favoured class (Ruth Kelso, The Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance); the Lady is not distinguished from the gentleman or any other woman but turns out to be merely a wife, pp. 1-4. For the lady there is no recommendation of magnificence and liberality is restricted to alms giving, p.27. The emphasis of the ideal lady should be on her qualities of mind; 'modestia, non forma' is the motto imprinted on the opening page of Brathwait's The English Gentlewoman (1631); modesty, frugality, silence, charity, chastity and piety are the chief virtues cited.
18. Jones, p.248.

CHAPTER TEN

1. Chapter 9, note 8.
2. Dale Underwood, Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners, pp.143-44.
3. Cyrus Hoy, 'Fletcherian Romantic Comedy', Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama, 27(1984), p.9.
4. Elizabethan-Jacobean Drama, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, p.218.
5. Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare, p.31.

6. Lewis Einstein, The Italian Renaissance in England, pp.120-21.
7. *ibid*, pp.162-65.
8. *ibid*, pp.167-68.
9. Harold Nicolson, Good Behaviour: Being a Study of Certain Types of Civility, p.147.
10. *ibid*, p.148.
11. Greenblatt, p.163.
12. Einstein, p.169.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Hoy has suggested the following division of labour: Fletcher: Act 2, Scenes 1-3; Act 3, Scenes 1, 2 & 4; Act 4, Scenes 1-4, 6(97-189); Act 5, Scenes 1(1-163) & 2. Massinger: Act 1; Act 3, Scene 3; Act 4, Scenes 5, 6(1-96) & 7; Act 5, Scene 1(164-287) & 3 ('The Shares of Fletcher and his Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon', Studies in Bibliography, 9(1959), pp.150-51 & 159. Inconsistencies in the collaboration are analysed in his article 'Massinger as Collaborator: The Plays with Fletcher and Others', in Philip Massinger: A Critical Reassessment, ed. Douglas Howard, pp.55-60.
2. Nancy Cotton Pearce, John Fletcher's Chastity Plays: Mirrors of Modesty, p.203.
3. Charles Barber, The Theme of Honour's Tongue: A Study of Social Attitudes in the English Drama from Shakespeare to Dryden, p.122.
4. Robert E. Morsberger, Swordplay and the Elizabethan and Jacobean Stage, p.116.
5. George Macaulay Trevelyan, England Under the Stuarts, V, p.11.
6. F.T. Bowers, Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 36 (1937), p.43.
7. Robert Ashley, Of Honour, pp.31 & 38-39.
8. Bowers, p.51.
9. R. Malcolm Smuts, Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England, p.19.
10. See pages 309-10 for a study of the language of the mercenary ethic.

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